The
SMART SET
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ness

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The SMART SET

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The SMART SET

The Aristocrat Among Magazines

THE QUEST OF LIFE

By Randolph Bartlett

She was twenty-one and had lived always in a cloister.

"Show me life," she demanded.

They took her to the brilliantly lighted cafés, and showed her men and women eating and drinking, laughing, dancing and singing. But the noise only bewildered her.

"Take me away," she said. "I don't like life. It makes my head ache."

So they took her into the slums, and showed her the children swarming in the streets, the women shrieking from the windows, the peddlers haggling along the curbstones. But the squalor sickened her.

"Take me away," she said. "I don't like life. It makes my heart ache."

So they took her to the market place, and showed her thousands of men buying and selling, factories rumbling, millions of dollars passing from hand to hand, and men feverishly pursuing wealth. But the turmoil stifled her.

"Take me away," she said. "I don't like life. It makes my soul ache."

So they told her there was no more of life to see, and in her disappointment she wept bitterly.

"I will go back to the cloister," she said. "I was happy there because I could dream that life was beautiful."

But as she approached the gates, she met a youth walking along the highway, singing.

"Perhaps you can show me life," she said to him as her dying hope flickered.

"I am life," he replied, and she saw he was beautiful.

So she put her hand in his, and walked along the highway with him, singing.

REFLECTIONS OF A MAN OF EIGHTY UPON BEING LOOKED AT SIGNIFICANTLY BY A PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN WITH A TURQUOISE FEATHER IN HER HAT

By Winthrop Parkhurst

I

BIGAMY is prohibited. When you marry you must divorce happiness.

II

LOVE is a versatile emotion. It is the cause of most marriages and nearly all divorces.

III

WOMEN are not to be trusted. They may lie to you about their infidelities very cleverly. But the chances are they are faithful to you all the time.

IV

No woman believes she is as beautiful as she is told she is by the man who loves her. No man believes so, either.

V

THE world has spent fully a thousand years trying to state the difference between an optimist and a pessimist. The effort is wasted. There is no difference between an optimist and a pessimist. The difference is between their wives.

VI

IT is the idle amusement of the world to make a mock of love because it is the idle amusement of love to make a mock of the world.

VII

WOMEN are more truthful than men. They achieve this virtue by insisting upon being lied to.

VIII

EVERY woman has a past—even if it is only in the future.

IX

WOMEN do not pursue men. An undertaker stays in his office.

THE HOLBEIN HEIRLOOM

By Anne Warner

Author of "The Gay and Festive Claverhouse," "The Taming of Amorette," "The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary," "Susan Clegg," etc.

ADOLPHUS was being buried with honors. He was dead, but he still had the power, apparently, to prove his love. Adolphus in life had been adored by Lady Bridget. In death she idolized his memory. With her own strong arms and capable hands she had dug his grave, watering it meanwhile with her briny tears.

Those same arms and hands, too, had prepared what was mortal of Adolphus for interment. His remains were softly cradled in the folds of the oldest of Lady Bridget's few remaining flannel petticoats, within an oblong deal box that had once contained kippered herring, of which Adolphus had been inordinately fond. This latter token of thoughtful consideration gave to the obsequies a fragrant and affecting touch.

Adolphus—I am alluding to the name now—denotes, in the original, a noble wolf. In this instance, however, the signification only partly applied. Adolphus was beyond words noble, yet there was nothing in the least wolflike about him. Adolphus, so far as breeding and appearance went, was just an ordinary, common, or garden variety of black cat. And he had died at a ripe age of that most natural of maladies in a genus distinguished for its nine lives—feline senility.

The spot chosen by Adolphus's lifelong mistress and friend for his final resting-place was under the tallest and broadest and most sweepingly umbrageous of a fringe of unhappy willows on the boundary of the Jamescourt estate. Thither Lady Bridget had trudged, spade in hand, to make the excavation, and thither she had trudged a second time, with the herring-box-coffined Adolphus held reverently on leveled forearms betwixt swelling bust and portly abdomen.

Thus she had headed a procession. It was not long, nor was it imposing. But it was fittingly solemn, more out of respect for Lady Bridget than for her defunct burden. For Lady Bridget, despite inferiority of age and rank as compared with at least one or two of the others, was nevertheless the acknowledged head of the Court Castle household. For Lady Bridget was a born efficient. And she had proved it.

Tenderly, impressively, Lady Bridget had placed the casket enclosing her jewel on the greensward beside the open grave, and the family, five in all, inclusive of the single maidservant Amelia, all in funereal black, as Lady Bridget had decreed, were gathered about with mournfully lowered heads.

Lady Bridget alone lifted her tear-moist eyes.

"I think," she said in a choking voice, "that it would perhaps be fitting to say a few words."

She paused there, and it was then that the earl, her father, ventured to make a suggestion. He was enormously tall and excessively thin; and as sallow as saffron. With one clawlike hand delving into the tailpocket of his

frock coat, whence it promptly emerged with a small, gold-crossed volume, he said:

"I have here the Book of Common Prayer. It might be possible, might it not, Biddy, to find a passage which, without in any wise seeming sacrilegious, might apply."

Lady Bridget merely looked reproachful. But her curate-husband made a somewhat shocked, restraining gesture.

"Just the same," the earl persisted, "I can't in the least see why we shouldn't say 'dust to dust, ashes to ashes,' or something of that sort, don't you know."

"It would be most—most impious, desecrating—ah, pagan, I might say." This from the Reverend Thomas Clothorne, the earl's son-in-law.

The countess, who was Lady Bridget's stepmother, never raised her gaze from the turf, nor did her son, Lord Court. Amelia was watching a bird —a robin, she decided it was—boldly foraging within a yard or so of the dead Adolphus, and thinking how Adolphus would have enjoyed stalking it were he still alive.

If the earl had a retort in mind Lady Bridget checked its utterance. She felt that it was neither the time nor the place for religious discussion.

"I daresay Adolphus had a soul—much more of a soul than have some persons I know—" she began, "and I'd like to feel that when I get to heaven he'll welcome me with a mew and a rub of his side against my shins. But his soul will take care of itself. What we're interested in now is giving his dear old bones a quiet and comfortable resting place."

She hesitated a moment, and for the second time the earl, who was stuffing the prayer book back into his pocket, ventured a word.

"It was you, Biddy, who thought something should be said."

"I do think so," his daughter replied. "And, as I intended from the first, I mean to say it. For it's quite right and proper that Adolphus should have a eulogium. It was Ebenezer Elliott, our own 'cornlaw rhymer,' who wrote:

If 'twere not for my cat and dog,
I think I could not live.

"And if it hadn't been for Adolphus and his mother and grandmother before him, heaven only knows how this family would have existed in the last thirty years. It was his grandmother, as you know, that led me to dig up the monks' buried treasure; it was his mother who was responsible for the discovery of the peat-bog, and it was he, when he was no bigger than a rat, that led me to that secret passage where all that wealth of old copper pots and kettles were hidden. My heart grieves for Adolphus, for there was no telling when he might have directed me to a diamond mine. But it grieves most to think that he has left no progeny to aid us in our declining years."

Lady Bridget ceased speaking. She had no more to say; but even if she had, she couldn't have said it. Her voice had grown that husky, and the tears were rolling down her fat and ruddy cheeks.

She wiped her eyes on the end of her black cotton apron. Then she laid two lengths of rope, already provided, across the grave, and beckoned to her husband.

"You hold these, Thomas," she said, "and I'll lay Adolphus on, and then you and I'll lower him."

The curate was middle-sized, sandy-haired and splotchy-skinned, and he had weak eyes, almost no chin, and protruding upper teeth. From long practice in obedience to his wife's commands he moved with ready alacrity.

Lady Bridget, having laid the herring box across the ropes, relieving the Reverend Thomas of two ends and facing him lengthwise of Adolphus's encasement, said:

"Now!" and began to lower.

The grave was something over three feet deep. But when the box had descended about two-thirds of the way, it stuck. That is to say, it stuck at one end—Lady Bridget's end.

They tried to jounce it over the obstruction. But it stubbornly refused to be jounced. The earl came forward with suggestions, and even young Lord Court, who rarely took an interest in anything, moved a step or two towards the seat of trouble.

"Pull up your end, Biddy," advised the old earl, "and let Thomas release his. It'll go that way."

"And bury Adolphus standing on his head?" demanded his daughter indignantly. "Never. Not if I have to dig the grave all over."

The Earl of Jamescourt relapsed into silence and Lord Court retreated the step or two he had essayed.

"Lift, Thomas," said Lady Bridget.

And, between them, Adolphus once more rested above ground.

Then Lady Bridget peered inquiringly into the depths and her brows knitted. She moved to the right for a better view. Then she gazed down from the other end. It was most peculiar. She could see the obstruction. It jutted out nearly an inch. It was a curved, yellowish stone. But what puzzled Lady Bridget was how her spade had missed it in straightening to the vertical the grave at that end. She must have escaped contact with it by barely a hair's breadth.

She seized the spade and, leaning over, plunged it at the object vindictively. Inanimate though it was, it seemed to have maliciously, with grim humor, delighted in interrupting the burial of poor, dear Adolphus.

Her spade screamed at the contact, quivered, and sent a vibrant shock through her hands and up unto her arms. It was evidently more than the small stone she thought it. It was probably the edge of a rock.

"Why, my dear," said Thomas, who was as interested as she, and now after her attack, got the first look, "it—it's something made by man. It's not the Almighty's handiwork. Look! Look!"

The vibration that had thrilled her had shaken the earth as well, and it had fallen away in a great flake, exposing a marble rim. Or at least enough of it to warrant the curate's declaration.

Lady Bridget was not emotional. Like most energetic and efficient persons, she was rather stolidly soberminded. It took a great deal to shake her poise. But she could see more in a second than some others could see in a month, and she could think ahead with a swiftness that made of electricity a laggard.

She looked now—had looked really in advance of her husband's direction—and took in everything at a glance. Unless every sign failed, Adolphus, at this last instant, seemingly, of his earthly career—Adolphus dead and ready to be turned to clay—had unearthed for the James-James-James family, of Court Castle, a treasure trove distinctly worth while.

The excavation she had made for the the repose of Adolphus was, as must already have appeared, of limited dimensions. And Lady Bridget was stout of limb. Nevertheless, in far less time than it takes to record it, Lady Bridget had squeezed into the hole, the upper edges of which reached nearly to her waistline, and with competent proficient fingers had set to work. And this without a single uttered word.

Her action, however, following so close upon the somewhat excited entreaty of the Reverend Thomas, was more compelling than any verbal outburst. The other four mourners, including the negative and hitherto stationary countess, moved forward in solid phalanx and with surprising haste. There is no measuring the impulsive power of curiosity even in the most phlegmatic.

In his eagerness to see, Lord Court narrowly escaped disaster by tripping over Adolphus. His agility saved him, though, and the rank reached the graveside unbroken.

But what with Lady Bridget's bulk and her bent-over head, as she intently guided her busy digits, there was really very little but Lady Bridget to see when they got there. Amelia alone, her coign of vantage chancing to be the best, was

able to obtain a fleeting glimpse and to venture an opinion.

"It aren't nothin' more'n the top of a stone crock, if you should ask me," she said with disappointment in her tone, "belike lots wot we 'ave in the scullery."

Without pausing in her work, Lady Bridget with some irritation flung back:

"Amelia, hold your tongue! How dare you speak until you're spoken to?"

But the old earl, who was next Amelia, whispered into her red and prominently projecting ear:

"A crock, my good girl. The ancient Britons frequently buried coin in crocks." Showing that, in spite of his age, he still retained the optimism of youth.

"Whatever can it be?" murmured the countess, speaking for the first time.

Lord Court peered unsuccessfully and observed: "I do hope it's the diamond mine Biddy spoke of. Diamonds are such valuable things."

"It's much more likely to be a bit of statuary," hazarded the curate, who had joined the others. "I had a fairly good look and it appeared to me like the base—round, don't you know—of a sculptured figure."

"By Jove! A Venus, perhaps." It was Lord Court who thought of that.

The faded eyes of the earl almost danced. "Fancy!" he exclaimed. "Lord Elgin got thirty-five thousand pounds for his find."

"It would be nice if we got thirty-five thousand pounds for ours, wouldn't it, now?" remarked the countess.

And just then Biddy, as they called her, scrambled out of the grave, her black frock all clay-stained, and dived for her spade. They fell back, by one accord, to give her room, and she fell vigorously to digging. She cut away a square yard of turf and placed it carefully to one side, and then she made the soil fly.

No one said a word. They all itched to see what she had uncovered in the grave, but they stood in their places as if chained and never so much as craned a neck. Which was how, in years, Lady Bridget had come to dominate them.

Once only Lady Bridget looked up and spoke.

"Amelia," she said, "hurry as fast as you can and fetch me a garden trowel."

Then she went on with her digging again, and Amelia flew away across what was by courtesy known as the park.

By the time she returned Lady Bridget was ready for the trowel. The hole she had made was not so deep as Adolphus's grave by a foot, but it was wider and longer, and it gave her more room. She went into it on her hands and knees and got busy at once with the trowel.

The others, now that she was less compellingly present, edged forward a little, but could see nothing except a slight bulge of earth, which she appeared to be rounding. But after a few more minutes they observed that her back was bunching and swelling. Whatever her find was, she was evidently endeavoring to loosen it from its resting-place.

Then her head lifted once more and she called:

"Thomas, throw me those ropes."

Her husband obeyed.

There was another interval of suspense, during which the ropes disappeared. When they appeared again she addressed the family collectively.

"Now," she said, "you can all lend a hand."

And she assigned two to each of the rope-ends, while Amelia and she manned the other two.

At a signal from her, all lifted together. But nothing moved. Nothing, that is, until she did some more loosening with her trowel. When, with some creaking of the hempen twist and a dull snapping of hard-clinging soil, the precious object was freed and rose slowly to the earth's level.

Then the masking soil quickly was cut and scraped away under Lady Bridget's deft manipulation of the trowel, and the find stood revealed.

It was a sculptured marble vase nearly three feet tall.

"There!" said Lady Bridget proudly.

"It's either Greek or Roman; I don't know which. But I'm sure it's worth a lot. And now I think, in spite of Thomas's strictures, we should all join in saying 'God bless Adolphus!'"

Which they did—the curate included.

Chapter II

There had been much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth at the birth of Lady Bridget some—but why mention years, since a woman is as old as she looks, and Lady Bridget didn't begin to look the age that her birth date made her! The weeping and wailing and teeth-gnashing were because Bridget was a daughter, whereas a son and heir was whole-heartedly longed for and confidently expected.

If it were not that there is no ratio whatever between how much a man has to leave and how much he desires an heir to inherit, Bridget could still have been a girl with comparatively little relative heart-burning. For the estate of James James-James, Earl of Jamescourt, would hardly have brought the cost of the bills announcing the sale, supposing indeed that the family pride —which was as lofty, icy and impenetrable as the most conventional type of feudally descended pride can possibly be—had admitted of such a sale.

On a wayline which crossed another wayline, miles and miles from any main line, there stood in those days a small station, with a very small red brick public house a hundred feet behind it. At the public house one could negotiate the hourly rental of an old horse, a very old brougham, and a man so old that he almost shut up like a jacknife.

Entering the brougham, one could be driven over three miles of heavy, sandy road, running irregularly across a purple, barren heath, to come at length upon the fringe of unhappy willows which, in years to come, as we have already seen, were to be so closely associated with the burial of Adolphus and the saving of the family fortunes by the unearthing of a Roman—for it wasn't Greek—vase. And behind those willows lay then, as now, the extremely small estate of Jamescourt, with Court Castle —surely the least castle-like castle in the whole British Empire—in the midst of it.

What sorry tribe of original Britons ever willingly or unwillingly entrenched themselves there will never be known, but conquering man has by nature agreed, apparently, to value anything— no matter how small or how worthless —that was valued by the conquered; and so the original site of Court Castle was striven and restriven for, lost, captured, fortified, recaptured and refortified, throughout the ages of British history.

In the fourteenth century it had fallen to a severe order of monks, and this had led to its further drop in the days of the Dissolution. Some particularly black debt had been settled with it, and the man who could be paid with so wretched a bribe was commonly supposed to have been Cromwell's executioner. Whoever he was, he left only a daughter, she left only a daughter, and *she* left only a daughter. This last heiress married a gentleman who looked like James the First, and was called James in consequence. He rebuilt the castle and renamed the estate. A century later cousins married and hyphenated their names. Later still, money came from somewhere, and an effort towards further glory resulted in a peerage. Then followed two hundred years of sordid poverty, and then a century of what was very close to inanition.

And then Lady Bridget was born.

And though she wasn't a son and heir, she lost no time in proving herself very much of an acquisition. For as soon as she could walk and talk she began to manifest the most incredible energy. There had never been a James-James who could approach her for initiative or for accomplishment. Aged five, she planted a tree in the treeless garden. It was a slow-growing tree, but she nursed it carefully, and by the time she was ten it was twice as tall as she was. Then Lady Bridget made a

pet of one of a litter of kittens that were born in the stables—it was Adolphus's grandmother, by the way—and exerted a world of effort to rearing it as a model of its kind. If it contracted an unseemly habit she spared no pains to break it and was enormously successful.

When Adolphus's grandmother had reached maturity she developed a passion for clawing the furniture, the wainscoting and the door jambs. Every time Lady Bridget caught her at it she spanked her soundly and put her out of doors. In this way she soon conquered her, and Adolphus's grandmother no longer clawed. That is to say, she no longer clawed in sight of Lady Bridget. The fact was that she had found something much more pleasing to draw her claws through than chair and table legs or oak wainscoting or equally nonporous door jambs. She had found it in the garden. It was Lady Bridget's tree.

Before Lady Bridget discovered this the bark was pretty well in ribbons and the tree was moribund. Now the easiest and most natural thing for Lady Bridget to have done would have been to cut the tree down. But she never did the easiest and most natural thing. She was more thorough than that. The tree having died, she went a step further than the hewing down and casting into the fire which the Scriptures enjoin. She dug the tree up, delving to the depth of its longest and deepest root.

And at the end of that root her spade struck the top of the iron chest in which the monks had buried their treasure, when driven forth, more than three centuries before.

It was not a particularly rich treasure, but it provided, among other things, enough money to send Lady Bridget to school, where she met for the first time real people.

She was still at school when her mother died, and, realizing the vacancy thus caused in her father's life and affections, she set herself to work to fill the gap, and succeeded in engineering for the paternal earl, who was then forty, a second marriage with a schoolmate who was almost half-witted, but not quite.

As a result of this alliance there was the long-delayed yet never-quite-despaired-of heir. Lady Bridget brought him up; and then, wisely or unwisely, married his tutor.

The tutor—the Reverend Thomas Clothorne—eventually, by means of Lady Bridget's influence and efforts, became a curate; and the entire family became—not so much by their own desire as by her incredible faculty for assuming responsibility—dependent on Lady Bridget for initiative and management.

Just how heavy a load they were for her to pull along no one but she fully realized. Only the most unflagging perseverance and the most wonderful luck, both of which she had as allies, could have accomplished it. Fortunately no one among them was sufficiently up to date ever to need expensive surgical operations, and they lived so out of sight that the most rigid economy was quite possible.

When, during an extremely cold autumn, Lady Bridget was at her wit's end where to obtain money for coals to save them from freezing during the hard winter which she saw in prospect, Adolphus's mother came gallantly to the rescue. For, had it not been that Adolphus's mother seemed somewhat under the weather, so to speak, Lady Bridget would never have thought of looking for catmint. And had she not looked for the catmint, she would never have discovered the peat bog. And if ever there was a lifesaver that peat bog was it. It not only saved them from sore throats, asthma, bronchitis and other ills by keeping them warm, but it cooked their food and, by using it in barter, Lady Bridget was enabled to secure many necessities and a few luxuries as well.

No one who hasn't tried keeping up a castle, though, with only one maid, a stepmother, a curate husband and a peat bog can form any conception of what an herculean task it is. But Lady Brid-

get did it, and her father and brother even managed—encouraged by her—a genuine feeling of being gentlemen. It was a habit with them to refer to a pair of snipe that meditated over the peat outrages as "the shooting," and they were forever alluding to a "stroll through the stables," just as if they contained a string of hunters instead of being so long empty that not even the faintest odor of horseflesh remained.

Altogether it was a tremendous triumph of mind over matter, and Lady Bridget had never wavered. No, not even now when it had become time for the heir to marry.

Oh, if you could have seen him, that future peer of the realm! He had never had a temptation, he had never seen life in any degree, he hadn't a vice, he almost hadn't a feature. He rarely spoke, he never read. There was a very grave suspicion that he never thought.

Yet the brave half-sister had not despaired, and her royal good luck had now come to her assistance as usual. Adolphus, stark and cold, but a worthy descendant of maternal parent and grandparent, had saved the day.

Chapter III

The family were gathered together in the great hall of Court Castle. The hall, it may be said parenthetically, was not so great as might be imagined; but it was always called that. Most great halls have stone or marble floors, but the great hall of Court Castle had a wooden one, and a very much worn and hollowed-out-in-spots wooden one at that.

In the centre of this floor, raised on a black oak table with two very new looking deal legs, stood the Roman vase, scrubbed and almost polished by Lady Bridget's energetic hands. And around it, some sitting, some standing, the earl and his people formed a circle.

Of those who had made up the funeral cortège Amelia alone was absent. Her place was filled, though, by an urbane elderly gentleman with a microscope in place of a monocle. He was the Reverend Thomas's second cousin—Dare Clothorne—and he occupied the extreme upper rung of a ladder on the lowest rung of which men who buy rags and bones crowd one another uncomfortably.

It was he who had just decided that the vase was Roman and not Greek.

"Then I don't suppose it's worth tuppence," said Lord Court indifferently. "Now if it had been a Greek Venus we might—"

But Lady Bridget raised a hand and he stopped just there.

"I don't think much of it myself," confided the earl. "But if it's not worth anything, it might prove ornamental on the terrace. I think I remember having seen such objects on terraces."

The countess moved uneasily. It was a sign that she was about to speak.

"With flowers in them," she contributed in a low, hesitating tone.

The curate said nothing. He was not on the most friendly terms with his second cousin—disapproved his calling in fact—and never spoke to him or in his presence unless it was imperative.

Lady Bridget approached the vase and, placing one hand on its top, drew away to the length of her outstretched arm and bent her head in deliberative examination and appraisal.

"There's no denying it's ancient," she declared, "and anything ancient's worth money. Wouldn't the British Museum buy it, Clo?"

Clo pursed his thin lips and took his time about answering.

"The British Museum has more of them than it knows what to do with." He paused for a breath and added: "And far better examples."

"How about the Louvre?" suggested Lord Court. "You're commissioned to buy for the Louvre, aren't you?"

"I might give a hundred guineas for it," Clothorne hazarded. But he spoke to Biddy rather than to the heir.

But Biddy glared at him.

"I'll see you and your guineas in Guinea first," she returned decisively. "I daresay I can get a thousand by sending it up to Christie's. Or I might

have one of their men down to appraise it."

The weak eyes of the curate lighted and his lips drew away from his protruding teeth in a half-grin. It took his Biddy to handle his second cousin.

"I daresay you'll do what you think best, anyhow," Dare affirmed. But he drew his large magnifying glass from his pocket and, stooping, examined with fresh care the sculptured band which ran around the vase's middle.

The old earl leant forward in his chair.

"I tried to make out those figures," he said, "but they were no end confusing. I fancy, though, they must be historical."

The gentleman of the uppermost rung continued to examine. Then, reassuming the upright, he turned to the peer, his back to the vase and his hands behind him.

"Quite so," he said, adopting a disquisitionary tone. "Quite so. They are historical. This vase was no doubt stolen by the Gauls from the Romans in about the year 250 A. D. There is every indication of that. The sculpture, I take it, represents Old King Cole, fiddle and all, running after his daughter Helena, who in her turn is running after her husband, the Emperor Constantine, who in his turn is seen pursuing his father-in-law, the king. It is most—most interesting."

"Will you give a thousand pounds for it?" asked Lady Bridget, who was all business and not in the least concerned about who or what the carven effigies represented.

"It would be taking a great risk," said her husband's second cousin.

But when he said that she knew that she had him, and wished that she had named a higher figure.

"Still," he went on, "if you'll pay for packing and carriage up to London, I might be persuaded to—"

"Not a farthing," said Lady Bridget. "Take it or leave it."

And in the end, of course, Dare Clothorne took it on her terms, and once more the real head of the Jamescourt household was in funds to carry out her projected plans.

No later than that evening she called her brother into the drafty library, and there, surrounded by mildewed, rotting and wormeaten books at which no one ever thought of looking, and by the light of a single flickering candle, she laid bare to him her plans for his future.

"You haven't any more brains than the law allows, Court," she began, "and you're far from being the handsomest man in the kingdom; but with a title and as heir to a peerage, I see no reason why you shouldn't marry at least a half-way decent American heiress. I don't know very much about American heiresses, it is true, but from all I've heard and a few things I've seen, I believe them procurable. With a thousand pounds in hand we may at least have a try for one. So tomorrow morning at nine I'll expect you to be ready to go up to town with me. I've sent Amelia over to Wragg's to order the fly. You needn't bother to take much along in the way of clothes, seeing that you haven't much that is presentable to take, and seeing that I'm going to buy you a complete new outfit. But you'll make yourself look as tidy as you can manage, and be sure not to oversleep. On second thought, I don't believe I can trust you not to, important as our enterprise is. So I'll awaken you at seven myself."

Lord Court was not, as a rule, loquacious, as has already been indicated. But now he was dumb. The prospect, quite unexpected—for Lady Bridget had not so much as hinted at it until this minute—had floored him completely. His mouth hung open and his pale blue eyes blinked at the flickering candle flame.

"You don't appear one bit appreciative," complained his sister. "If you lose your tongue when you meet your heiress the fat'll be in the fire for certain. Do try to gather your wits and hold them. You haven't any to spare, you know."

The young man did make an effort,

but it was not successful. He only stammered and looked more like an imbecile than ever.

"Well, I hope you'll be better in the morning," concluded Biddy, rising. "I wouldn't stop out of bed long, if I were you. You seem to be quite overcome."

Then she went away and left him there alone with the mildewed books and the guttering candle.

Chapter IV

The trouble with Lord Court was that he was trying to think, and he wasn't used to it. The effort quite robbed him of speech. And he wasn't a bit better in the morning. He did manage, when pushed, to answer "yes" or "no." But that was about all. You see he was his mother over again. Still, beneath it all, as it eventually turned ont, Lord Court was not wholly without possibilities.

London awed him. Which was only to be expected. It was his first visit there since he was ten, and now, at twenty-five, he saw it with altogether different eyes. He tried to recall some of his earlier experiences and was mute in consequence. About the only thing he accurately remembered were the lions in Trafalgar Square. Their lodgings—not far from the lions—were precisely the same which he and his tutor had occupied when he was of tender age, but he saw nothing in them that was in the least wise familiar. In that they were cheap and shabby and furnished with things that were antiquated rather than antique, they should have reminded him of Court Castle and have been a guarantee against homesickness, but they didn't and weren't.

The first few days of their stay were devoted to the tailors, the hatters and other tradesmen. Lady Bridget clothed her brother anew and fashionably throughout, not forgetting a cane and a monocle. If one would intrigue Americans, one must make up in accordance with their notions of the past. As his endeavors to induce this latter to fit between brow and cheekbone were futile, he merely let it dangle.

Attired in his irreproachable morning raiment, including a frock coat, white waistcoat, grey-striped trousers, cream-colored spats, a top hat, and the dangling monocle, Lady Bridget took him to a photographer and had him sit—likewise stand—for his portrait. The photographer wished to pose him, but Lady Bridget wished no more and, as usual, she had her way. She knew her brother's physical—especially his facial—shortcomings, and believed herself more competent than the photographer to minimize them and to play up the heir's better points, which no photographer could possibly be expected to discover on such sort acquaintance. It had taken years for Lady Bridget to find them herself.

"Now, Court," she admonished at the last second, following the straightening of his shoulders and the careful arrangement of his hands for each experiment, and while the photographer stood ready to squeeze the bulb, "try to remember three things: Keep your chin well up, your mouth tight shut and your eyes wide open."

The results were not phenomenal, but they were mildly satisfactory.

Before the prints were delivered, however, Lady Bridget, who was never idle, had bought herself a black silk evening gown and a string of artificial pearls and had set about ferreting out some kinsfolk who could serve her purpose. They had lived for so long in such a secluded fashion that they had hardly any relatives, so far as their knowledge went. But, of course, if you are English and go trailing family, it is next to impossible not to find some.

Lady Bridget, in her peregrinations, was fortunate enough to light upon a red-bound volume bearing the striking and compelling title of "The Upper Ten Thousand." It adorned a second-hand book stall in Fleet Street, was marked a shilling, but by dint of argument and persuasion she secured it for sixpence.

Individuals may be forgotten, but, among the aristocracy at least, family

names never are. So nothing was easier or more practicable than to run through this alphabetically arranged catalogue of the upper ten, guided by the family nomenclature. The As developed nothing, however, that appeared at all promising, though the Arbuthnots and the Avonmores and the Allerdyces were all distantly connected. Nor were the Bs any more promising. Not, that is, until she had nearly reached the end of them, when, suddenly, she encountered the name "Brayen," and paused in her leaf-turning to read.

"Ophelia, of course!" she exclaimed delightedly. "The very one. It's odd I didn't think of her in the first place."

The Honorable Ophelia Brayen was their ninth cousin, once removed. But ninth cousins in England are often as good as firsts, and sometimes better. It all depends on circumstances.

The Brayens weren't rich, but they had always managed to live up to their position, and the Honorable Ophelia went about a lot. They had lived in a grim old house just off Portland Place. Lady Bridget remembered quite well going there for tea when she was a small child. Ophelia was about her own age. If Lady Bridget's memory served her, Ophelia had married and was the mother of a boy a year or two younger than Court. But her name was still Brayen. She had evidently chosen her husband from among her many cousins.

"The Upper Ten Thousand" gave the addresses of those whom it chose to honor. Lady Bridget looked for the Honorable Ophelia's and found that it was still the grim old house. The Brayens, evidently, were no more nomadic than the James-Jameses. It is odd how traits thus run through the different branches of families.

Lady Bridget now lost no time in writing a note to the Honorable Ophelia in which she invited herself and her brother to tea in the grim old house on the following afternoon. And she purposely omitted to give their stopping place, because she desired particularly to guard against anything so discouraging as a polite rebuff. Moreover, she wished that the tea should be quite informal. And she had her wish.

The Honorable Ophelia, once she was assured that Lady Bridget had not come to borrow money, was uncommonly cordial. She even complimented Lord Court and his dangling monocle by saying that he looked "quite smart."

The Honorable Ophelia had managed to keep her figure, was very much up-to-date, and appeared years younger than Lady Bridget, though it would have been clearly evident to one more initiated than her caller, that she "did her hair."

Lord Court hadn't the first idea what to say, so he said nothing. Lady Bridget wished to say a great deal, but she felt a little constrained in the presence of her sphinxlike brother. So, when tea was over, she suggested to her ninth cousin once removed that they two go into another room.

"Court won't mind being alone in the least," she added. "In fact I'm sure he'd prefer it."

"My Charlie'll be in from his club in a little while," her hostess parried. "He's rarely later than six, or quarter after. Then we can leave them together."

This gave Lady Bridget an opening for a question and she learned that the Honorable Ophelia was a widow, and that Charlie, who had just finished Oxford, was "thinking of the army."

Charlie came in at six-twelve by the clock on the drawing-room mantel; and he wasn't in the room five minutes before he showed that he had about everything that Court lacked. He was rather handsome in a fair way, he had admirable poise, and was decidedly self-assertive.

"I do wish Court was more like your boy, Ophelia," said Lady Bridget when at length they had withdrawn and were alone together.

"How can you expect him to be, Biddy, buried down there at Jamescourt in the wilderness, and tethered to your apron string into the bargain? Leave

him up here for a bit, and you'll find such a change in him when you get him back that you won't know him."

"You—you really think so?" questioned Lady Bridget, in doubt, really, for the first time in her life. "Would—would it help him to an American, do you think? That's what I wished to talk to you about."

The Honorable Ophelia smiled.

"To an American heiress or a Gaiety girl. I'm afraid Charlie prefers the latter. However, either one would wake him up. And that's what he needs most."

Meanwhile Charlie Brayen had carried Lord Court off to his own rooms on the floor above, and was doing his best to draw him out. He began by planting him in a big leathern armchair and sticking a tin of cigarettes under his nose.

"Try one," he said, with something imperative in the accent. "Something special, you know. Or, if you prefer Turkish or American, why—"

"I—I've never smoked," the other interrupted timidly.

"No? What a shame! You've missed a lot. How about a peg?"

"A peg?" queried Lord Court.

"Yes, whiskey and soda, you know. Or brandy, if you'd rather."

Lord Court shook his head. "We're all teetotalers at Jamescourt," he explained, this time a little proudly.

"Fudge!" cried Charlie. "Why you've never lived, old chap. I'll wager you've never kissed a girl in your life, either."

His visitor didn't deny it.

"Stop a minute!" Charlie cautioned. You might have thought that Lord Court was shooting words like a rapid-fire gun instead of sitting mute. "Let me show you something."

He turned to his writing table and gathered up a couple of framed photographs, and then swept half a dozen more from off his mantel-shelf.

"There!" he said, holding one after another up before the gaping son of an earl. "Rather a dazzling bouquet of beauties, aren't they, old top? Gaiety principals and chorus most of them, though the prize of all—this neat little bit of rosy cheeks and millinery—is doing a turn at the halls at present. Any one of them would sell you a kiss for a sovereign. It might be good training for you and cheap at the price."

No oyster was ever more dumb than Lord Court, but there was an appreciative glitter in his pale blue eyes.

"Take 'em and look 'em over," Charlie Brayen suggested, dropping the galaxy of beauty into his lap. "You seem to be suffering from *tigon linguae*. I'm going to give you something for it."

There was a cellarette in one corner which looked like a music cabinet. Charlie opened it up and produced two bottles and a glass shaped like an inverted cone. He poured a few drops into the glass from the smaller bottle, tilted the glass and twisted it around until the liquor was spread all over its sloping sides, and then filled it nearly to the brim from the larger bottle."

"Now," he directed, "swallow that. It's a tongue tonic."

"If it's spirits—" began his guest.

"It's medicine," Charlie cut in. "And nothing to be afraid of. I hope you can trust me."

Lord Court trusted him. He took the sherry and bitters at a gulp, choked a little, and then smacked his lips.

"It's extraordinarily good medicine," he commented.

"Good! I should say so. Why, see! You're speaking already."

In less than five minutes Lord Court was conscious of a delightfully warm glow stealing over him. He felt almost inconceivably comfortable. He began to realize that Charlie Brayen, instead of being intentionally superior in manner, was a tremendously fine fellow. And the young women of the photographs, which he still shuffled, were growing more and more beautiful with each passing second. All of the pictures showed an abundance of bare necks, shoulders, and arms. Some of them were full-length views, and in these the skirts were abnormally short, or there were no skirts at all. In one

the lady was entirely in white fleshings.

"Isn't this a Venus?" asked the future peer.

"A Venus!" returned Charlie enthusiastically. "There never was more of one. You can wager your last shilling on that."

"Do you know them all?"

"Oh, that's only a few I know. Some of the jolliest aren't here."

"I—I think I'd like to meet a jolly one," Lord Court ventured. "Could you—you arrange it?"

"Arrange it? Of course I could. It would be great fun." And he meant that. Just at the moment he couldn't conceive much better sport.

"But I don't quite see how I'm to get away from Biddy," the heir confessed.

"I could ask you to go to the play with me."

But Lord Court wasn't altogether sure that this would serve.

"Suppose Biddy should want to go along?"

"Well, that would be awkward to be sure."

"You don't by any chance happen to know an American heiress, do you?"

"I know a dozen."

Lord Court's featureless countenance suddenly took on real expression. He beamed.

"Then it's quite all right," he said. "That's what we're up in town for—Biddy and I. If you'll promise to introduce me to an American heiress she'll let me go anywhere with you."

Charlie Brayen, who had sat down opposite to his caller, leant over and slapped him on the knee.

"By gad!" he exclaimed laughing. "You're clever after all. You *are* coming on. Just stick to me, Courtie, old man, and I'll show you the way over the hurdles. I'll make a rowdy-dowdy boy of you yet. A regular nut, don't you know."

Nothing could be done at the moment, though. But it was arranged that Lady Bridget and her brother should dine at Brayen House on the following evening.

"And meanwhile," said Charlie, "I'll get a bid for Court to a dance to which I'm going. It's very select—Lord and Lady Smithereens'—and it's for an American girl they met last winter on the Riviera. An American girl with a pot of money."

"Really!" cried Lady Bridget, pleased beyond measure. "How charming! Americans are such quaint persons, I'm told. Rough diamonds and all that, but so perfectly delightful, even in their unexpectedness."

Chapter V

Lord Court's evening clothes were the *dernier cri*—the very last scream in fashion. Lady Bridget had had the good sense to take him for his wardrobe to a tailor in Saville Row who built clothes for a list of crowned heads and nobles so long that he couldn't get all their names in gilt letters on his shop window. When it came to figure, her brother had his limitations, and she knew it. So the choice of a tailor was a matter of paramount importance. And the Savile Row artist had lived up to his reputation by performing a miracle. In the coat which he provided, Lord Court looked almost athletic.

Lord Court naturally was not familiar with the great houses of London. But he had seen a few, which Lady Bridget had been at pains to point out; and he had learned something of neighborhoods. The neighborhoods of fashion that is, such as Belgravia and Mayfair.

It became quite evident to him, therefore, even before the taxi drew up to the curb before a somewhat brazenly-lighted doorway, that Lord and Lady Smithereens resided in a far different locality from any of those to which his sister had introduced him. It lacked dignity. Where it was not florid or lurid, it was dour without being impressive. In spots it was almost squalid.

Lord Court had never—as, I think, has already been indicated—exhibited even in small degree what may be called mental acuteness. He was very far from being a keen observer. Nevertheless there was something, not only

about the environment, but about the interior of the establishment into which he was conducted, which was at variance with all his preconceived notions of where and how the nobility lived and entertained.

He might have asked Charlie Brayen about it, but the effect of the tongue-loosing sherry and bitters, which Charlie had insisted on repeating before dinner, had by now worn off and the heir was minus both speech and initiative.

The inside of the place was rather dazzling. It was over-illuminated. There was a veritable riot of electrical illumination, which was turned back in glittering waves and glittering sparks. The drawing-room—or what he supposed was the drawing-room—had a bare, highly-polished floor space in the centre, evidently for dancing; and this was a waving pool of reflected light. There were red velvet-covered seats around the walls, which glowed like flame. There were shining marble-topped tables, which reproduced in miniature as many of the lights as their space would hold. And the gilding on walls and cornices snapped sparkling jets of fire.

And the people! There were droves of them. The dancing-floor was empty at the moment; but there was scarcely a table that wasn't surrounded. To Lord Court, however, the people were little more than a colorful blur, punctuated with the black and white of masculine evening apparel.

As they entered there was a resounding blare of music, and upon a small stage at the far end of the room a young woman appeared. Lord Court was too near-sighted to see what she looked like, but he identified the figure as feminine by the swirl of skirts which his faulty vision afforded him.

Charlie Brayen caught him by the elbow.

"Behold!" he cried. "Behold your Yankee heiress. Pretty Polly Pruin, late of the New York Winter Garden, and the dancing hit of the London season."

Not being able to see Polly, the heir turned his gaze upon his ninth—or was it his tenth?—cousin. His mouth was wide open.

"A dancer?" he gasped.

"Dancer! I should say so. You never saw such dancing as she does. She's set the old town mad. She's been at the Trocadero since last March. They won't let her go."

Lord Court was more than ever perplexed.

"But I fancied you said that Lord and Lady Smithereens met her last winter—"

Then Charlie roared.

"You *are* a bally ass, Court," he flung at his companion. "I thought you understood. That was all rot, of course, about the Smithereens. Never heard of such persons."

Lord Court said nothing for a moment. He was thoroughly bewildered. Then he managed:

"And—and this place? Where are we?"

"At the Bon Ton Supper Club, old dear. In Soho. Very Bohemian and all that, but patronized by all the toffs, you idiot. I thought you wanted to meet a Venus or two. Why it was you who suggested the American heiress subterfuge."

"But—but you spoke so convincingly to Biddy, that I—I was quite taken in, don't you know."

"Rather difficult, too, that, eh? To take you in. Fancy my doing it!"

Once again the heir took him seriously. His shoulders went back a trifle and his chin lifted nearly an inch. Metaphorically, he preened.

"I—I flatter myself I'm not easily spoofed," he said proudly.

Just at that moment Court felt himself rudely shoved. He turned sharply with rising indignation to discover that it was a girl who in attempting to pass had brushed roughly against him.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, with a pleasant smile. "I guess somebody must have pushed me."

She was quite pretty, Court thought. Extraordinarily pretty, in fact, with big brown eyes, adorably red lips and

white teeth, and a wealth of reddish bronze hair.

"Oh, dear!" she went on. "And I've got you all over powder off my arm."

The heir wished very much to say something, but he couldn't. Her beauty and her voice—there was something strangely different in her accent and pronunciation from anything he had ever heard—seemed to paralyze his vocal cords. He just grinned inanely.

Charlie, however, sprang to the rescue.

"Don't you mind," he told her. "He'll keep it as a souvenir. He loves everything from the States."

The American girl smiled more broadly.

"But the powder's French powder," she declared.

"He'll love it because you gave it to him," Charlie threw back with a winning grin.

Then a hulking big fellow with a drooping blond mustache carried her off, and Lord Court emerged from his daze.

"Ripping! Eh?" asked Charlie. "What did I tell you?"

"But I thought Americans were—were—brown, or—or something."

"If you keep on thinking so hard it'll do you no end of harm, Courtie. You're not in training, don't you know. You can't always tell a Yankee by looking. It's quite difficult at times. You've got to hear 'em."

The heir to an earldom brightened visibly.

"Ah, yes, to be sure," he said gleefully. "I did notice that. Extraordinary, isn't it?"

"I think it's jolly," said Charlie. "I like it, no end."

"I like it too," said Court. "I *am* glad they're not brown. I don't think I should care particularly to marry a brown woman. So conspicuous, don't you know."

"Well, rather," said Charlie.

Then he linked arms with his protegé and moved off in search of friends who might have been so fortunate as to have secured a table.

"Do you think by any chance that she might be an heiress?" Lord Court asked before they had taken three steps.

"All American women are heiresses," was Charlie's answer. "That is, all I've ever seen. Heiresses to good looks, at all events. If they haven't inherited brains and dollars they're no worse off than some of us who are limited to about the emptiest thing in the world—a title."

Lord Court bridled.

"Titles don't grow on trees, nor can they be dug out of the ground," he rebuked.

"No," retorted Charlie, who may have been a bit envious, "but they're a drug on the market, nowadays, all the same. If the American demand should drop off they wouldn't be worth the price of sour apples."

Just then he discovered what he was looking for and made a line for it. It was a table at which sat four women and two men. And they were all friends of his.

Chapter VI

Lord Court had a perfectly lovely time at the supper club. He woke up amazingly under the double stimulus of a mixture to which his cousin considerately limited him—grenadine and port—and the inspiriting badinage of several sophisticated ladies of the chorus, including two from over the sea who were a liberal education for him in things American.

And Lady Bridget, meanwhile, had an equally lovely time with Ophelia Brayen in an intimate tête-à-tête at Brayen House. On the previous afternoon they hadn't got much beyond generalities. But tonight they sat up late and went into particulars. Which was made possible by the arrangement that both Lady Bridget and her brother should spend the night under the Brayen roof.

"I can't help feeling," said Lady Bridget, "that it's *infra dig* for us to stoop to such an alliance as I propose for dear Court. But necessity knows

no law, my dear Ophelia, and necessity is pushing us all very hard at Jamescourt. The castle needs a new roof, and we're pretty well down to the last of everything. Would you believe it? We have only three bath towels left, and when they're in the wash we all have to go unbathed. And now that poor, dear Adolphus is gone, without leaving an heir, there's no hope of our ever coming into another windfall."

The Honorable Mrs. Brayen looked puzzled for a moment.

Then she said: "Adolphus! I don't recall. Was he of your mother's line?"

"No; of *his* mother's line. He was a cat."

"A cat!" exclaimed Ophelia. "How extraordinary!"

"Yes," Lady Bridget continued. "You'd hardly believe it. But we never had a piece of good fortune at Jamescourt that wasn't indirectly linked with one of Adolphus's family, and he was the last, so far as I know, of his noble line."

Thereupon she told her cousin all about the finding of the monks' treasure in the iron chest, the discovery of the peat bog, the tracing of the copper pots and pans, and finally the unearthing of the Roman vase.

"And it fetched a thousand pounds, you say? How perfectly lovely! You'll be able to buy some bath towels now, surely."

"I must husband every penny," Lady Bridget said firmly. "It cost a lot to fit out Court, and there's no telling how long it's going to take to find the heiress. The towels will have to wait."

"But I should think, after finding all you have, you'd just dig from morning until night. I'm sure I should. The place must be a Golconda."

"You'd think so, wouldn't you?" Lady Bridget indicated an urgent tear by wiping the corner of one eye with her handkerchief. "Poor dear Adolphus! Why I've dug and I've dug until each hand was nothing but a great blister. But I've never found anything without a leading. If I'd had any sense I'd have started a cattery and provided against the future. The trouble was that every kitten that Adolphus fathered died. So, you see, the American heiress has been forced on us."

"I'm sure I'll do my best, Biddy," said Ophelia sympathetically. "I'll get it noised abroad that there's another peer on the market, and I ought soon to have no end of enquiries. You mustn't forget to leave some of his photographs with me."

"I've brought some," was the efficient Biddy's reply. "I'll get them while I think of it."

And she ran quickly up to the chamber that had been assigned to her, and returned with them instantly.

The Honorable Mrs. Brayen looked them over, but her countenance failed to light up with enthusiasm.

"He doesn't take a good picture, does he?" she asked presently. "Now if he'd only been taken with his glass in, instead of hanging, it would have added so much. Really, my dear, you know, he needs something."

Lady Bridget showed that she wasn't pleased.

"After all," she said, "it isn't he or his looks that we're selling. It's his title."

"Oh, yes, of course. I do understand that. Only Americans are so shrewd. They're quite willing to pay for titles, but there's a so much better chance if one can offer a bonus as well, of, say good looks or a modicum of brains."

"The title is very old, and I feel we should get a good figure for it," returned Lady Bridget stiffly. "I'm curious to know what Court thinks of the heiress he's meeting tonight at Lord Smithereens'."

But when she asked her brother about it the next morning he didn't seem to have a very clear idea of her. He couldn't even remember her name. He was suffering from an infernal headache, and he accused Biddy of having neglected a very important point in his education. Why, he wished to know, had he never been taught to dance?

Strangely enough it was one thing of which Lady Bridget never had thought. But she was willing to make amends.

"It's never too late to learn," she said. "I'll have a dancing master down from London twice a week to teach you the steps, and you can practice with your mother and me. And Thomas shall play for you. He's a little out of practice, but he used to be very good on the cabinet organ."

The plan, however, came very far from meeting Lord Court's approval. He preferred to stop up in town until he had mastered the art. Charlie Brayen had told him that he needed a month or two there to "brush him up." Besides, if he was to land an American heiress it would mean a great deal to be on the spot.

Lady Bridget listened with great patience, but she was not to be won.

"You'll have to get your brushing up," she declared, "after marriage and not before. And to be 'on the spot,' as you call it, in the heiress hunt would be a detriment instead of an advantage. It's best that your future countess should see as little as possible of you until the amount of the settlement is arranged and the nuptial agreement signed. I haven't learned to dance since I've been in town, but I've learned something else; and that is that while you manage to get by, so to speak, in the bosom of your own family, you are not regarded as a conspicuous example of the attractive among strangers. So we are returning to the castle this afternoon by the four thirty-two. And since you don't care for my dancing-master plan we'll defer that until after you are married and include it in the brushing up. And there's just that much money saved."

Lord Court had been too long subject to his elderly half-sister's will and direction to enter a demur. He should have liked very much another riotous session at the Bon Ton Supper Club; but he followed Lady Bridget without protest into a taxi that afternoon, and from the taxi into a second-class railway compartment, and from the compartment into Wragg's fly, and so back to Jamescourt and the obscurity and monotony of life behind the fringe of unhappy willows.

CHAPTER VII

Had Lady Bridget foreseen just what she was coming home to, however, she might have prolonged her visit to town indefinitely and her lightly-endowed brother might have supper-clubbed to his heart's content.

In some way—probably via Amelia—it had leaked out in the neighborhood that the earl and his family had fallen heirs to a very considerable amount of money, and the tradespeople thereabout, far and near, who had been resignedly nursing their claims for years, in the hope of something of this sort some day happening, had descended upon the castle like a swarm of seventeen-year locusts, demanding immediate payment under penalty of dire things to happen.

The earl, frightened half to death, had held them off with the statement that his daughter, who alone looked after such plebeian matters as accounts, was temporarily absent, but would take the matter up with them on her return.

Lady Bridget had the whole story from her weak-kneed and very much perturbed husband the moment she set foot in the hall. And while it did not in the least alarm her it did vex her.

"It's most trying," she said, "that I can't leave the castle for the briefest time without something happening. And I'd like to know how far a thousand pounds would go amongst those cormorants. I don't see why Father didn't tell them, directly, that they'd been misinformed. He knows we haven't come into anything worth speaking of."

The Reverend Thomas held his head as if the rebuke applied to himself. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, and he reflectively handled the spot where his chin should have been, had he possessed one.

"The earl and the countess have both been busy on a list of what they call

necessities for themselves," he ventured at length. "And, as for that, Biddy, I've been thinking that I must have—"

But he got no further. What he thought he must have will forever remain a secret locked tight in his shallow mind. For his wife turned on it the key, which she promptly threw away.

"You'll stop thinking at once," she said sharply. "For it will serve no purpose. And neither will the list, unless it is to light the fire with. What's left of the Roman vase is going to stick so tight to my fingers that nothing but death will pry it loose. Did Father tell the cormorants when I'd be back?"

"He couldn't, because he didn't know," returned the curate, meekly. "But I daresay they've been watching the trains, and it wouldn't surprise me to see them here any minute."

And Thomas, lacking in cleverness though he was, in this instance appeared to be gifted with a superhuman faculty for premonition. For hardly had he spoken when the enormous iron knocker on the diminutive hall door echoed resoundingly.

Lady Bridget jumped.

"Good Lord!" she muttered. "Already!"

Amelia came slouching forward from what by courtesy was called the servants' quarters, but what was really a very moderate-sized kitchen and scullery combined. Lady Bridget, though, returned her with a wave of her hand.

On one thing she was determined, and that was that not a single foot belonging to a creditor should cross the castle threshold.

She waited patiently for the knock to be repeated, and then she opened the door just wide enough to permit of squeezing herself through it. Stationed on the time-hallowed and time-hollowed upper stone step she faced the gathered horde. How the multitude had been so quickly marshaled she couldn't imagine. If she saw one, she saw a hundred. And they were still coming.

Experience had taught Lady Bridget that to be the first to speak was to gain at least a shade of advantage, so she lost no time in putting this grain of wisdom to the test.

"Well, Huggins," she said in a voice that rang with superiority, and the authority pertaining to it. "What in heaven's name does this mean?"

Huggins, occupying a foremost place in the van, was the butcher who had supplied Court Castle with its Sunday joint almost as long as Lady Bridget could remember. He was old and white-haired, but his face was still ruddy, and he wore a black coat for the occasion, and a chimney-pot hat with a cock's feather stuck in the band.

At Lady Bridget's words he took the hat off, and she felt that she had gained a point.

"It be, me lady," he said a little sheepishly, which was not unfitting in a mutton-butcher, "that 'earin' as 'ow you'd 'ad good fortune, we be thinkin' it might belike you'd care to gi' us a share on w'at's owin'."

Lady Bridget looked very stern and the hearts of those who had eyes to see quailed in their breasts. Certainly she did not look promising.

"I thought at first," she said, "that it was an ovation. A welcome home, you know, Huggins. But I'm mistaken. It's only a dunning party. And I may as well tell you first as last that I don't like it. When I have any money to pay you—and that means not you, individually, only, but all this innumerable company—I'll send it to you. I shouldn't think of giving you the trouble to call for it. You've been far too patient and considerate for that."

The man on Huggins's left, a tall, lank, grey man, with a high round forehead, in whom Lady Bridget recognized the miller who had been furnishing the James-Jameses with flour for forty years at least, made answer.

"We bean't goin' to wait to doomsday," he growled. And another behind him, and one or two further back in the crowd endorsed him with a murmured: "'Ear, 'ear!"

"No one mentioned doomsday but yourself, Lezzard," Lady Bridget re-

torted. "And I regard your introduction of the term as most disrespectful. But I don't mind saying—not to you, Lezzard, nor to those who applauded your impertinence—but to the good folk in whom you've evidently endeavored to stir up dissension, that while the good fortune Huggins spoke of has not yet developed, I have every reason to believe it soon will. I went to London to dispose of a precious possession. I placed it in good hands, and a purchaser is now being sought. When the sale is made you will all get what's due you. Yes, to the last farthing."

She paused just a moment to let it sink in. Then she added:

"Now, please run away home, all of you, and pray don't bother me again."

The door behind her was still slightly ajar and she slipped back through it. The hall was quite deserted, so she ran upstairs to her chamber. There she found her husband gazing out of the window, from which he could see the step on which she had stood and the drive beyond.

"Well," he said to her, "how did you manage it?"

"The way I always manage things," was her answer. "By domination. They're going, aren't they?"

"Yes. Most of them."

"You mean that there are still some who are hanging back?"

"Only a few. Why, God bless my soul! They're—they're—"

"What?" shrieked Lady Bridget, tugging at the strings of her bonnet. "Do speak up, Thomas."

"They've knocked him down and—"

"Who? Who? Who have they knocked down?" Her grammar gone by the board.

"Why, bless me, if it isn't old Lezzard."

Lady Bridget smiled calmly.

"And now they've got two others and are pummelling them, most brutally. I can't see who they are."

Lady Bridget having untied the strings, removed her bonnet.

"I know," she said quietly. "They are the two men who cried 'Ear, 'ear.'"

Chapter VIII

Lady Bridget knew too that seeds take time to germinate. But she didn't know how long some can take. She had never sown before a seed that was expected to flower into an American heiress in full bloom. She waited in great patience, though, and Lord Court waited in less. He had had a taste of the world and he hungered for a larger bite.

Little by little, in spite of Lady Bridget's excellent resolution as to how she was going to hoard the remaining pounds, shillings, and pence of the Roman vase money, it had slipped through her fingers, until now there was very little left. And there was no telling when the creditors might grow uneasy again.

She never let a single week pass without writing an importunate letter to the Honorable Ophelia. Sometimes the Honorable Ophelia wrote in reply, and sometimes she didn't. But there was never anything in the least encouraging when she did. American heiresses in London that year, if the Honorable Ophelia was to be believed, were as scarce as hen's teeth.

And there had never been a year at Jamescourt of so many emergencies. The drains, for example, had given no end of trouble. Experts declared that the whole drainage system was archaic, and should be replaced by one more up to date. Otherwise there was no telling what might happen to the family. Malaria, typhoid, diphtheria were but a few of the horrible possibilities.

Then Lord Court complained of a sore throat, and Lady Bridget, for the first time in her life, became very close to panic-stricken. Not that she wouldn't have borne up bravely had the Almighty deemed it best in His wisdom to deprive her of her half-brother's presence. She felt that she could steel herself to the ordeal of his bodily absence. Indeed she was prepared in a measure for that, since after his marriage to the travel-loving Yankee he would probably be away most of the

time anyhow. But his untimely taking off must mean far more than that. It involved the only hope she had of ever extricating the family from its pauperism. For Court was the last of his line and with him in his grave there was no one to inherit the title which she looked upon as their future security.

So she sent up to London for a specialist who came down, stopped over trains, examined the heir's throat, gave him a prescription for a gargle and a spray, advised that the drainage be attended to at once, and went up to London again with fifty pounds which he hadn't brought with him.

Of course Lady Bridget had the new system installed without delay. And it was no sooner in and the bill paid than the roof of the right wing of the castle fell in, one night, with a crash. What it didn't do in the way of damage to furniture, carpets, balustrades and stairways, the rain, which fell unceasingly for two weeks after, did do. And when Biddy got through paying for the new roof, and for such other restoration as couldn't be done without, there was barely fifty pounds left.

In her extremity she resumed digging. She dug everywhere, and incessantly, early and late, week days and Sundays. For a fortnight she pursued this course unflaggingly, with nothing more valuable to reward her than a few dozen old bones and two or three broken bits of worthless fossil remains.

Sitting before an open fire in the hall, on the last evening of the fortnight, her discouragement got a bit the better of her.

"I do so wish Adolphus were alive," she said, half to herself.

The family were all there, but for a full minute no one of them spoke. Neither individually nor collectively could they be called loquacious.

This time, however, her wish still echoing in his ears, the earl eventually observed:

"Speaking of Adolphus, Biddy, reminds me. I'm quite sure I heard a cat mewing somewhere about, only this afternoon."

"You imagined it," the curate decided. "There's been no cat about the castle for years, except Adolphus. And he's where he can't come back."

But Lady Bridget was interested.

"Where did you hear it?" she asked.

"I'm not quite sure, now," answered the earl; "but I fancy it was either in the library or here in the hall. It wasn't in the drawing-room. I'm certain of that. For I haven't been in the drawing-room for a week or more."

"Whatever could it have been?" enquired the countess.

"It was the wind, of course," supplied her stepson-in-law. "The wind often sounds like a cat mewing. I've noticed it frequently."

"Or a rusty hinge," suggested Lord Court, who for twenty minutes had been pretending to read the *Times*, which in blissful oblivion he was holding upside down. "It's extraordinary how like a cat a rusty hinge sounds."

"I'd know Adolphus's mew in a thousand," Lady Bridget murmured reflectively. "It was so plaintive."

"But how could it be Adolphus?" It was her husband who enquired. "Cats don't come back."

His better-half—his far, far better-half—lifted her head from where it had been reclining against the cushioned back of her threadbare wing-chair.

"Oh, don't they?" she asked scathingly. "I've always been under the impression that that's just what they do do."

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed the countess, startled out of her usual torpor. "Please don't, Biddy. You make me feel quite creepy."

More from sheer weariness than obedience Lady Bridget dropped back her head once again and relapsed into silence.

Lord Court turned a page of the inverted *Times*. The earl locked his long, thin fingers, and twiddled his long, thin thumbs. The countess shivered, stlll picturing the defunct Adolphus as he might appear in their midst. And the Rev. Thomas Clothorne, contrastingly active, fed the fire with a

sawed fragment of one of the rotted roof timbers.

A half-hour ticked itself away. Then the tall clock in the corner, after a preliminary protest, painful in the extreme, struck nine brazenly discordant strokes, and the company rose. All that is, save Lady Bridget, who was softly snoring.

They disappeared into the library, where they were joined by Amelia, and where the curate, in a hurrying monotone, read prayers. Following this they filed back into the hall and bore down upon the table at the foot of the great staircase—which was great in name only—where five candles waited in their five candlesticks. The earl, as the head of the family in the absence of his daughter, lighted four of the candles with one match. For even matches were an item at Court Castle. Then, each with a candle in hand, formed a sort of torchlight procession, ascending to their chambers above.

Lady Bridget slept soundly for three hours in the wing-chair. The timber contributed by the Reverend Thomas to the fire on the hearth flamed awhile, became a glowing ember, broke in half, slowly cooled, and disintegrated into flaky white ashes. The tall clock protested at hourly intervals, and added unfailingly a stroke each time to its ensuing discordant outburst.

The echo of the twelfth laborious and inharmonious clang had barely died when Lady Bridget awoke with a start. She had heard Adolphus crying. His plaintive mew still sounded pathetically near. There was no doubt about it. She knew that voice better even than her own.

In her extremity, Adolphus had risen from the grave to comfort her. He was here somewhere, and he was here with a message.

She sat very still for a long moment and listened. The silence was unbroken.

"Dolly, Dolly, Dolly!" She called his old fond petname.

And, as sure as she was sitting there, he answered. If she lived to be a thousand no one should ever convince her that "Dolly" hadn't answered.

Why, he was there, right behind her chair. In another instant he'd be rubbing his side against her shins. But, when he didn't she got up and looked for him.

The big candles on the mantel-shelf above the fireplace had burned low and required snuffing, but there was enough light to see into every corner of the hall, and Adolphus certainly was not in sight. Then she dropped to her knees and looked under her chair. And—

"Heaven be praised!" she murmured. For, black as it was under there, and black as he was, she saw him. His eyes glowed back at her in the darkness like twin topazes.

She reached under her hand to caress him and draw him out. But her hand met nothing at all. And when she bent her head again to look, the twin topazes were gone. So she got to her feet again, and once more looked about; but without reward. Then she moved the chair away.

It was most astonishing, his disappearance. More astonishing, really, she felt, than his appearance had been. And that had been astonishing enough, goodness knows.

"Dolly, Dolly, Dolly!" she called again. And she had still another astonishment.

"Me-e-e-ou-u!" he answered.

It came straight from a spot in front of her. The spot over which the chair had stood.

She dropped to her knees again and lowered her head, and called a third time. And for a third time Adolphus responded.

He was under the floor. How he could have got there Lady Bridget hardly questioned. How he could have got from his grave and under her chair was riddle enough in the first place. It was evident—very clearly evident—to her that matter meant nothing to him. He could materialize himself, and dematerialize himself, just whenever he saw fit.

It was very wonderful, and yet not half so wonderful as she felt it ought to seem to her. And while she knelt

there, thinking of this, it was all at once borne in upon her that Adolphus must have come back for a purpose.

Now no one could ever call Lady Bridget slow-witted. No sooner was she conscious of the fundamental reason for Adolphus's return than she worked out the details. Unquestionably he was indicating to her that something lay hidden under this portion of the hall floor. And whatever it might be, she felt assured that it would prove of sufficient value at least to relieve the present monetary stringency.

It was midnight, and long past her bed hour, but that made no difference to the energetic head of the James-James clan. She moved her chair back directly over the indicated spot, so that there might be no possible mistake as to the location, and then, after lighting her candle, she proceeded to the scullery, where she exchanged it for a lantern. With this in hand, she unbolted the kitchen door and went out into the night. It was chill and windy, and Lady Bridget was but lightly clad. But considerations of self had never weighed with her, and they didn't now.

She crossed the bleak open space which divided the rear of the castle from the stone building which served both as a dairy and a tool house, and there procured her saw, chisel and hammer. Thus provided, she returned with equal expedition, and at once set about removing a piece of the black oak flooring about a yard square.

The oak was nearly as hard as iron. But Lady Bridget's muscles were well developed by hard work, and her experience had given her a deftness in the handling of tools which was well nigh professional. She hammered and she pried and she sawed. She sawed, pried and hammered. It got her wind a little and beads of sweat formed on her brow and rolled down her fat, red cheeks. But she never desisted for a minute. Even when she found that under about the middle of the square there was what seemed to be another—a second—flooring, she didn't weaken. She went right ahead and removed the uppermost one first.

And when she had that up she saw how wise she had been not to cut into the second. For it was not really a part of the floor at all, but just one broad board laid between the joists and resting on cleats. It was covered with dust fully an inch thick. But Lady Bridget lifted it up and was about to turn it on edge to knock this dust off, when she discovered that something was fastened to the under side of it. Something wrapped in an old piece of cloth—so old that the thread was rotten and parting—which she knew at once was the treasure which Adolphus had left his grave to inform her of.

Nevertheless, there was no use messing up the hall floor any more than was necessary. So Lady Bridget knocked off into the hole as much of the dust as she could, just as she had originally intended, before she turned the board over and loosened the nails which secured the cloth to it.

Whatever it was, certainly no care had been spared in the attempt to preserve it. It was swathed and swathed in yards and yards of this dull grey material, which was motheaten and wormeaten until it was practically falling to pieces.

Having unwound it with slow and painstaking patience, Lady Bridget at length disclosed what appeared to her nothing more nor less than a black-painted piece of wood, about a foot and a half long by a foot wide.

Of course it must be something, or Adolphus wouldn't have taken the trouble to tell her about it. That was her first conclusion. But after she had washed it and dried it, and held it under the candlelight, and still could make nothing out of it, her common sense asserted itself and made her miserable indeed.

"The very idea," she said to herself, "of my putting any faith in poor Adolphus's judgment! It was good of him, of course, the dear thing that he is—or was—to try to help me. But what can a cat—and a dead cat at that—know

about values? It may have been something once. I suppose it was, or they'd never have wrapped it up with such a lot of care. But time has destroyed it, just as it destroyed the stuff they wrapped it in, so it's about good for firewood, and that's all."

She wiped her perspiring brow with her hand before she thought, and looked as if she had smeared it with burnt cork. And then, too, there was that floor to be put down again, and put down carefully, for she couldn't think of letting anyone know that she had been such a fool as to follow two weeks of profitless digging out of doors, with the loss of a night's rest at the instigation of a cat's ghost.

It took nearly as long to put the floor down properly as it had to take it up. Then the dirt she had made had to be cleared away and the tools returned to their regular place. And finally, there was that worthless find, fairly laughing in her face.

If there had been enough live embers to set it alight, she would have burned it then and there. But as there weren't, she carried it into the drawing-room and poked it away in what they grandiloquently called their curio cabinet, with the rest of the non-salable family heirlooms.

Then she climbed, a little wearily and very, very despondently, the grand staircase—never less grand than now—to the floor above, where her four charges, carefree and unpractical, had been sleeping calmly for hours.

Chapter IX

It was two months later. Spring had come again and brought Dare Clothorne with it. London was teeming with collectors, and the curate's second cousin, in hope that perhaps Lady Bridget had dug up another Roman vase—he had made a handsome profit on the other—or possibly another of the monks' iron boxes, had traveled down to Jamescourt to find out.

After waiting in the hall until he grew nervous and impatient, he strolled into the drawing-room. So far he had seen no one but Amelia. The household hadn't exactly rushed to him, and he felt a little conscious of a lack of cordiality. He was on the top rung of his own ladder, but the James-Jameses had always rather rubbed it in, it seemed to him, that their ladder and their place on it were infinitely higher than his. Which was true, of course; but the rubbing in wasn't pleasant.

Lord Court was about the only one of them that didn't make him feel uncomfortable. And he could have stood it from Lord Court better than from the rest, because he was, as Clo put it—they always called him "Clo," and sometimes "Old Clo," which he detested because of its veiled suggestion of "old clothes"—"such a silly ass anyhow."

He was no sooner in the drawing-room than he shot straight for the curio cabinet. It had for him just as potent attraction as the pole has for the needle. And his eyes immediately lighted upon Lady Bridget's blackened piece of board. It was far to the back, behind some broken pieces of old Sunderland lustre, Lowestoft and Chelsea, but Clo detected it in an instant, and experienced a tingling exultation at the sight.

He would have had it out in a jiffy, but the cabinet was locked, and so the best he could do was to squint at it, first from one side and then from the other, through the dividing glass.

He was so busy squinting that he quite failed to hear Lady Bridget's tread as she entered. She noted his interest, but never for a moment thought of the rubbishy thing that poor Adolphus had wasted so much of her time and energy over. She fancied that it was the piece of Japanese crackle she had rescued from amongst the kitchen crockery years ago, and which he had often admired but never made an offer for.

"Well, Clo," she greeted in hardly a tone of welcome, "what on earth brings you here?"

He jumped at the sound of her voice, and, facing her, smiled unctuously.

"Ah, Biddy," he said, "why so coldly matter of fact? Is it inconceivable that I should drop down sociably to ascertain how all of you have passed the winter?"

"Is that it? Then your conscience has been troubling you over the ridiculous sum you paid me for the vase. And I don't wonder."

The expert's lined face took on a reproachful expression, and reproach—pain indeed—echoed in his words.

"How cruelly unkind! If it would give you any satisfaction to know it, I sold that vase at a loss—a very appreciable loss."

"I don't believe it," was her frank rejoinder. "You're too shrewd for that, Clo."

"I pledge you my word," he insisted.

"Poof for your word! Men in trade never tell the truth. They'd starve if they did."

Her husband's cousin merely hunched his rather square shoulders and smiled indulgently.

Then the earl stalked in, tall and gaunt as a wolfhound on its hind legs.

"'Morning, Clo," he said coldly. "What brings you here?"

Five minutes later the countess appeared. She didn't say "good morning," but she did say: "What brings you here?"

The heir came next. He extended his hand.

"You *are* a stranger," he said. "What brought you down?"

The curate didn't come in for half an hour. Then his second cousin was very busy. It was nearly half an hour before their eyes met, and then the curate just nodded. But he turned to the earl and said *sotto voce*, "I see now what brought old Clo here."

Old Clo had the blackened bit of board in his hands, of course. He had spoken to Lady Bridget about it at the first opportunity, and she had fetched the key and turned it over to him.

"There's a treasure for you," she said in grimmest irony. For she was very well assured that even this enthusiast over relics would have to turn up his nose at it in the end.

Then Dare Clothorne had taken it to where he could get a strong light on it, and had subjected it to a very minute examination through his microscope. There wasn't a square sixteenth of an inch that escaped his trained observation.

Once or twice during the process he had given utterance to a hushed and non-committal "Extraordinary!" But that was all.

Lady Bridget had looked on amused and the others had looked on perplexed. They had never seen the thing before, and they each wondered where it had come from, and why, if Biddy had found it, she had said nothing about it. So far as they collectively could make out it was an ebonized panel from some old cupboard or sideboard.

"Clo *is* an old fool," whispered Lord Court to his mother, who simply nodded assent.

The earl, who was nothing if not an optimist, happening to overhear, whispered back:

"Don't be too sure of that. He knows. Perhaps it's a Rubens or a Rembrandt underneath."

Lady Bridget, who sat apart, was thinking of Adolphus. The time that the expert was giving to the thing argued that perhaps in her want of sophistication she had erred—erred terribly. Suppose Adolphus in his present state—on a higher and more illuminated plane—possessed a prescience superior to anything dreamed of by earthbound mortals!

The curate sat watching his second cousin with patronizing contempt, not unmingled with envy, until he could stand it no longer. Then he arose and crossed over to his wife and sat down with his back to him.

"Bless my soul, Biddy," he said loud enough for all to hear. "What is it all about? So far as I can see, it might be a charred bit dragged out of the ashes on the family hearth."

"It is," returned Biddy. "Figurative-

ly speaking, it is. A charred bit of precious family heirloom."

And just then Dare Clothorne lowered his glass and turned around.

"My dear friends," he said, with that calm, oily smile of his, "we have here a prize indeed. A genuine Holbein."

In spite of her best intentions, Lady Bridget gasped. Visions of banknotes of all denominations floated before her mind's eye. Hundreds of them. Thousands. Myriads.

The earl said: "There! What did I tell you? I knew it. Only I fancied it was a Rubens."

Lord Court looked at his mother, the countess, and the countess looked back at him.

"Wh-what is a Holbein?" he asked, puzzled.

"I've always understood it was a species of cattle," returned the countess. "Is it a cow picture?"

"You're thinking of Holstein," corrected the earl. "Holbein was a German painter."

The curate frowned. He didn't believe his second cousin knew what he was talking about.

Neither to sight nor hearing had Lady Bridget's gasp been lost on the expert. He'd make her gasp wider and louder, he told himself. So he turned directly to her this time and announced:

"I can get you ten thousand pounds for it."

But Lady Bridget didn't gasp at all. She was startled, but she was prompt to reply:

"We don't care to sell it."

Everyone stared at her, but she had them so well trained that not one of them opened a mouth to speak.

"You're sure you understand me?" asked Clo, astounded. "I said I could get—"

"I heard you perfectly," Lady Bridget interrupted. "Ten thousand pounds. It isn't for sale."

The ensuing silence was so palpable they could feel it. It would have been a relief had someone dropped a pin.

Dare Clothorne's gaze drooped and his smile died. For a long moment no one stirred. It was most trying.

Then Lady Bridget rose and the tension relaxed.

"It lacks a few minutes of noon," she said, looking straight at Clo, "and there's a train up at twelve-forty-five. If you walk briskly, you can make it."

He struggled to regain his poise, and partially succeeded. He moved towards her.

"Thank you," he said quietly. Then he paused, bowed to the others, and brought his eyes back to the earl's daughter. "You—you don't trust me," he added with some forced dignity, and went into the hall.

When they heard the hall door close they all began talking at once.

"Whatever did you do that for, Biddy?" asked the earl a little sharply.

"Ten thousand pounds chucked away," grumbled Lord Court. "I should think—"

"Yes, you should, but you never do," Biddy snapped him up. "And there are some more like you."

"I'll wager it's worth double that," offered the curate.

"It doesn't look to be worth half of it," the countess ventured. "May I see it close?"

Lady Bridget took up the Holbein from the table near the window where Clo had left it.

"I do wish he'd left his glass behind," she mourned. "One can't see a thing without a glass. It looks like a paintnig of the Egyptians in the midst of the Black Sea, with not an Egyptian in sight."

"The Red Sea, my dear," corrected her husband, literally.

"If you can see any red in that you must be color blind," she retorted, holding it out to him.

The earl came forward to have a look. "I never heard that Holbein painted Biblical scenes," he objected. "I thought only portraits."

"He never bothered much with the Old Testament, as I remember," expounded his son-in-law, "but he was

pretty strong on Madonnas and Crucifixions, and all that, you know."

"Did—did he ever do a Venus?" asked the noble heir.

"Oh, I daresay," the earl hazarded. "Most of them did in their moments of recreation."

They chatted and discussed in this wise for at least half an hour. Then Lady Bridget grew all at once pensive.

"You've an idea, Biddy; I can see you have," said the earl.

"If only Court had brains," she mourned.

"They're a confounded nuisance sometimes," her father argued.

"They're a necessity to do an errand cleverly. A man with brains might be trusted to take a Holbein up to London, but a man without brains might lose it."

But that simply sent the earl back to the first proposition.

"It may be worth almost anything," he said, just as if that were a fresh discovery. "You never can tell. Why we don't even know who it is. Suppose it was a portrait of Edward III." Which rather suggested that the mild idiocy of a wife may prove contagious even to a peer.

And here Lord Court rose once more to the surface. "I think, Biddy, you'd have done best to let him have it." He nearly always referred to other males as "him." "Ten thousand pounds is a tidy bit of money."

"But suppose it's worth fifty thousand pounds," suggested the Reverend Thomas. "He may be cheating us abominably."

"Suppose it's worth eighteen pence?" said the countess.

At that moment Lady Bridget reached a decision.

"I think I'll go up to town tomorrow myself," she said.

Chapter X

Man—which includes woman—proposes, but God has the veto power. This time, in His all-wisdom, He provided against Lady Bridget's going up to London by having a small stool in her path that night when she essayed to cross the hall for her bedroom candle. It was just large enough to trip her, and so tripping, to sprain her ankle. The injury was not so serious as to require treatment, but it did require staying in bed. And so to leave the castle, let alone to go up to town, was quite out of the question.

Whereupon the noble heir undertook to go up to town himself, and to take the Holbein with him. And he went.

And then, proving the Divine omniscience, a great incident—perhaps the greatest that had ever befallen there—happened at Court Castle. The Honorable Mrs. Brayen arrived in a motor, bringing with her an American heiress.

When their cards were brought up to Lady Bridget she very nearly collapsed. But, seeing that in the rigid economy necessary to be exercised at Jamescourt there were no smelling salts at hand, she stopped short of completely collapsing. On the contrary, she very promptly recovered herself. At least in a measure. For the fact that an American heiress was at last actually under the castle roof—the new roof which had cost so much—was a restorative in itself. Still the question of how she was possibly to put them up over night, with hardly a sheet that wasn't in holes, and the pillow-cases nearly as bad, not to speak of the absence of bath towels, was a sorely disturbing factor.

Nevertheless she at once engaged Amelia, assisted by the efforts of the countess, to make her as presentable as possible, and then had the Honorable Ophelia brought up to her room.

"At last, Biddy," she said; "at last! Isn't it glorious?"

One who didn't know might have thought she meant it was glorious to find Biddy at last helpless in bed. But, of course, Lady Bridget understood. She said she was delighted.

"Only," she added, "we're hardly in shape to entertain. With me here helpless, and—"

"But, my dear," Ophelia cut in, "we're not going to stop, you know. We

can't. We're motoring back almost at once. We've an engagement for tea in town at five. And we had a bite of luncheon coming down."

It was marvelous how Lady Bridget brightened over that. For once more she saw the star of the family fortunes shining as brilliantly as ever. It had just been that she was not at all cognizant of motor possibilities.

Then she remembered that Court had gone up to town.

"Of all days in his life to go!" she regretted impatiently.

But the Honorable Mrs. Brayen was again consoling.

"After all, it's just as well," she said. "I haven't even mentioned him. I thought it best to let Miss Savage learn of him after she was here. But to have met him might have spoiled everything. As it is, her curiosity will be aroused. She'll think of him and, being of a romantic age—she's quite young and lovely, really—she'll endow him with qualities he never dared think of possessing."

And that relieved Lady Bridget some more. It all went to show how well Providence manages matters.

"I—I think I might manage to get up a little later," said Biddy, "and hobble down to the drawing-room. I must see her, and I couldn't think of having her brought up here."

"Oh, you must meet her," said Ophelia.

"What is she doing now?"

"Your husband is with her. I think he's showing her about the place."

"Oh, then there's no haste. You don't have to hurry back to her. You can tell me all about it."

"Yes, you see how everything's working in. It gives me just the opportunity that I didn't see how I was to get."

Lady Bridget settled herself against her pillows, hoping she was hiding the holes.

"Where did you dig her up?" she asked. She had fallen into a way of thinking that most of the good things in life were dug for.

"You'd never imagine," returned Ophelia importantly. "At Rexer's."

"Rexer's!" Biddy had never heard of it.

"Yes. I found her quite by chance. You know no end of Americans have their frocks made there."

"Oh, yes."

"Well; so I gave one of the models a little money and told her what we wanted. And she found Miss Savage for me."

"I hope her name doesn't fit her," said the prostrate one.

"Not at all. She's really very nice. Quiet, and fairly good accent."

"And—and the money?"

"The money's quite safe. I made sure of that. I cabled."

Lady Bridget's life being centred in the purely practical, she asked :

"How much is there?"

"About a million in our money. Very comfortable, don't you think?"

"Oh, very. Fancy having a million. Where and how, do you suppose, those Americans ever get so much?"

"There are ways," returned the Honorable Mrs. Brayen noncommittally. "I believe in this case it was bottles."

"Extraordinary!"

"Yes. Bottles are so cheap. One never has to pay anything for them. Only what's in them. I can't see myself how a million pounds could be made from what's given away."

"Americans *are* clever," Lady Bridget admitted.

"Oh, quite," Ophelia agreed.

"And after you cabled?"

"Then I called. And then I had her to Brayen House to tea, and proposed this as a little lark. I said what dears you all were, and told her how you had dug up a Roman gallery, or whatever it was."

"Vase, dear," said Lady Bridget. "And you never mentioned Court?"

"Not a word. You see I'm clever, too."

"And you like her?"

"She's acceptable. A nice girl and—with a really reasonable voice."

The curate, meanwhile, was piloting the subject of consideration about, and

she was saying over and over again: "Please don't take so much trouble," and he was replying, "No trouble at all, I assure you."

For the curate had discovered something which neither of the ladies had thought it worth while to inquire about or mention. He had discovered that Miss Savage was quite pretty, not to say handsome. She was rather tall and extremely well put together, too. Her eyes were big and brown and she had a beautiful mouth with lips like ripe cherries and teeth of pearly whiteness. Her hair—there were masses of it—was the color of copper bronze.

She kept her hands in her pockets as they walked, and she was frankness itself. The Reverend Thomas was fascinated by her looks, but her frankness soon proved a thorn in his side.

"Why do you live here, anyway?" she asked when he had dilated at length on the age and history of the ancient tower at which they were looking. "Why don't you live in a jolly place?" It was an idiom she had adopted from the English.

He drew his scant height up impressively.

"We English," he said oratorically, "do not choose locations; we inherit them." And he had the feeling that that was rather neat.

But she was back at him in an instant.

"I know," she returned, her eyes wide, "but you havent' inherited this place. So I should think you would get out of it."

He didn't know what to say to that, and decided that she was very impertinent.

"What *is* a curate, anyway?" she asked later, picking up a stick to scrape the mud off her shoes. They were now in what was euphemistically called "the park."

"A curate is a clergyman of the Church of England," he answered stiffly.

"Oh, is it?" she said, surprised. "They have so many names, don't they? There's bishop, and archbishop, and vicar, and canon, and— Just where does a curate come in? Near the top or the bottom?"

The Reverend Thomas knew perfectly well what to say to that if he told the truth. But he was perfectly sure that he wasn't going to say it.

"It is so difficult," he said, "for those not of the church to understand ecclesiastical matters."

Having finished scraping her shoes, she threw the stick away and then she threw a broadside at him.

"Listen," she commanded. "Come, now, and tell me the truth. What was I brought here for? Do they want to sell or let the place?"

The curate escaped apoplexy by a hair's breadth.

"Mrs. Brayen and my wife are old friends," he stammered.

"Oh, say! That's no reason," she hit back. "It isn't Mrs. Brayen's car. She hired it just to bring me here. She must have something in mind. Some object in view."

The curate looked most unhappy.

"Is there a marriageable man in the family?" Miss Savage persisted.

The heir's brother-in-law mumbled that there was, but that he wasn't at home.

"I guess she didn't know that," said the young lady. But the curate was dumb.

"Where is he?" she inquired.

"Lord Court is in London," answered the curate stiffly.

The American heiress sighed.

"I wish to goodness I was," she said simply.

It had taken the Reverend Thomas some little time to show Miss Savage about, small though the estate was, and when they returned to the castle the family, including Lady Bridget and her ninth cousin, the Honorable Ophelia, awaited them in the drawing-room.

The heiress was duly presented. Then they all sat down again, and Miss Savage looked about critically. It was positively the shabbiest drawing-room she had ever seen.

Ths Honorable Mrs. Brayen, who

was always watching her out of the tail of her eye and listening with her good ear, sprang at once to the rescue.

"Isn't the old furniture lovely!" she rhapsodized. "This place is a treasure house of medieval—ah—ah—treasures," she ended weakly.

Whereupon the earl, in an effort to be cordial and help on the good work, exclaimed:

"Oh, you must hear about the Holbein!"

Miss Savage had no more notion of what a Holbein was than had the noble heir and the countess the day before. But she was wise enough not to ask questions. Of course Lady Bridget told the whole story, which gave her an inkling at least, and she determined to read up on Holbein as soon as she could after returning to town.

"Do show it us," urged the Honorable Ophelia when the narrative was concluded.

"Court's taken it up to London to have it valued," Lady Bridget explained. "He's so clever about such things."

"Why it may be worth any number of thousands of pounds," Mrs. Brayen cried enthusiastically.

"Just fancy! And hidden under the hall floor. It's a veritable Aladdin's cave, this place. And there's the title, too," she added *most* irrelevantly.

Miss Savage caught it, but chose, for the time being, to ignore it. There was very little she missed.

"I should think you'd have every floor in the place taken up," she said practically. Which no one had ever thought of. "There might be dozens of old masters hidden underneath."

If the tumbledown old shack was for sale she'd buy it, she determined. It would be a good gamble to tear it down. If it wasn't, then—why, of course. That was still a better idea.

"The floors are sacred," said the curate. "Think of the historic heroes whose feet have trod them."

The American girl, who thought the curate an awful bore, went right on as if he hadn't spoken.

"How can you find out the real value of a picture?" she asked.

"Oh, my dear! You take it places and they tell you," answered her discoverer. "There are people in Bond Street and Regent Street who know all that sort of thing."

"Court is going to take a cab and devote the entire day to going around with it," explained the earl. Taxis were since his time.

"I only hope he won't lose it," said the countess, speaking for the first time only to put her foot in it.

"Have you got a photo of him anywhere?" asked Miss Savage.

But, of course, they hadn't. Everyone had been left at Brayen House.

"I showed them to you," said the ninth cousin once removed.

"Oh, did you? I suppose you did. But you didn't tell me his name, and I see so many pictures of men. You ought to see my mail."

She spoke seriously, and no one took her speech as in the least amusing. Indeed, the suggestion of competition seemed to knock all conversation on the head for a little.

"Isn't it odd how some men run after fortunes," the countess said finally. And no one took that as amusing either.

Ophelia evidently thought it a good time to make a move. She rose with: "Well, my dears, we must go on now. It's a good run, you know. But I *have* enjoyed seeing you. It's such a delight always."

"I wish I could know what the Holbein is worth," said Miss Savage, as she shook hands with Lady Bridget.

Mrs. Brayen overheard, as usual.

"Perhaps Lord Court will come and tell me the result," she ventured. "Then *I* can tell you, my dear."

Lady Bridget was watching the heiress, and she was sure she saw just the least perceptible flicker of disappointment flit back and forth across her face.

It was a real encouragement to her. She felt satisfied that, in spite of the countess putting her foot in it twice, a beginning had been made.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN the heir returned the next day he brought the Holbein back with him. And the conclusions to which he had come were startling.

"I think we ought to let your cousin have it," he said to his brother-in-law. "Even if it is worth more we should never have known that it was worth anything but for him. Biddy thought that it was nothing but a black daub. She told me so."

At this Lady Bridget, who had inadvertently let her original opinion of the Holbein slip out in her brother's presence, only to regret it ever since, went straight up into the air.

"Court," she cried, "you *are* the greatest idiot I ever saw. Ophelia Brayen told me no end of tales yesterday of how Dare Clothorne has cheated people. He professes to be buying for the Louvre, and then lets them know quietly what he has bought and fleeces them terribly. Thomas was out showing Miss Savage about, and Ophelia could express herself freely. Why the rascal sold an Italian, who had invented a new way to get the hole through macaroni and is at the Savoy in consequence, a pair of moose horns shot in the Forest of Arden. Fancy!"

"Who in the name of heaven is Miss Savage?" asked the heir.

Wife and husband looked at one another, and then Lady Bridget told him.

"She's an American girl, and she's got a million."

"Did she seem to like the place?" he asked the curate.

"I—ah—well, really—"

The heir sighed. "I don't wonder," he murmured.

Later, when he was alone with his sister, the matter of the Holbein was brought up again. She brought it up. It occurred to her that some tact was necessary. She could no longer put her brother under foot. If he should take it into his head to balk at Miss Savage and her million, she didn't dare think of the future. So, instead of asserting her authority as supreme, she almost pleaded.

"You aren't really going to be a fool, are you?" she asked anxiously. "If we could get fifty thousand pounds you wouldn't need to marry money. Think of it! We must be sensible. You can't expect me to keep on digging up things. Nobody knows what a lot of unproductive digging I do. I'm always hunting. But I've never found anything yet when I hunted, unless poor, dear Adolphus aided. And it seems cruel, now that he's dead, not to let him rest quietly in his grave. I do wish you'd be reasonable."

But for some reason Lord Court appeared most obstinate.

"I'm going to have Old Clo down and talk it over again," he insisted. "You know blood will tell, Biddy, and honor is honor." And then, most abruptly, without pausing to take a breath, he asked: "What sort of a looking girl was she, anyway?"

And at that Lady Bridget took heart again. It showed that he was interested after all.

Now, with the first step well and favorably over, it only remained to have them meet and get really down to business. If it were at all possible to have Ophelia and Miss Savage down for a week! But they were so poor, and the castle was so woefully short of absolute necessities. Still, she might have some linens sent down on approval and servants could be got in for just a week.

But, oh, his pigheadedness over the Holbein!

Still, if she had only known, Lord Court had every reason to be pigheaded. But he wouldn't tell Biddy about it—not for the world. She *might* have scruples.

It all came about, of course, through what had happened on his trip to London. A number of things had happened. But he had come back taciturn in the extreme. Apparently he had been unable to find anyone who would attempt to appraise the Holbein.

"They wanted me to leave it with

them, and I wouldn't." That was all the satisfaction the family got.

The truth of the matter was that with him the Holbein had been a secondary consideration. He had eagerly seized upon the opportunity to go up to town because he wished of all things to see Charlie Brayen again and be his guest once more at the Bon Ton Supper Club.

So the first thing he did on arriving was to call Charlie on the telephone. Charlie was still abed, but he got out and answered the call in his pyjamas. Lord Court had proved such great fun on his former visit that Charlie was as eager as he for a repetition.

"I won't ask you to the house," he said, "because the *mater* is frightfully taken up with some matter or other and I don't know what she has on. But I'll meet you at the Savoy for tea and then we'll plan our evening."

As Court had never been to the Savoy he thought he had best discover its location first, so he had himself taxied there with the Holbein under his arm. And in the lobby, the first man he saw was Dare Clothorne.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Clo. "What on earth brought you up?"

He asked the question not because he wasn't quite sure already, for he knew the Holbein by its shape—but because he couldn't resist the opportunity for reprisal.

"I'm going to sell the Holbein," confessed the heir with the candor of innocence.

"You'll find that's easier said than done, dear boy," Clo returned. "I should never have made the offer I did for it, had I not had an immediate market for it."

"Can't I sell it in that market?" asked Court. "Where is it?"

But the expert only laughed and said: "That's for me to know and for you to find out."

"It would save me a lot of time and trouble if you were to tell me. Come, old chap, do be nice!"

And at that Clo laughed some more.

"That wouldn't be good business," he explained. "I think I've already been very generous. Besides, don't you see, you couldn't sell it, because you're not known, and no one would take your word for its genuineness. That's where my advantage comes in as an expert."

"Oh, I see," said the heir. "Then there's no use my taking it about at all, is there?"

"None whatever."

"But if I sold it to you for ten thousand pounds, Biddy would never forgive me."

It was then that Mr. Clothorne made a proposition.

"I'll tell you what's best," he said. "You walk over with me to my galleries, and we'll leave the Holbein there and go for luncheon."

"But I promised Biddy not to let it out of my hands."

"You'll need your hands to eat, won't you?"

"But I can hold it on my lap."

"Very well, then," said Clo, "only I thought you'd be more comfortable without it."

"No," rejoined the heir, "I'll be more comfortable with it." And he wasn't in the least clever, either.

So they lunched together, and Lord Court held the Holbein in his lap all the while.

When they were nearly finished, Dare Clothorne let the cat out of the bag. "Between you and me,' 'he said, "I have very grave doubts that that is a genuine Holbein."

The noble heir nearly choked. Then he said the obvious thing, as he might be expected to do.

"If it isn't genuine, why did you offer what you did for it?"

"Because it's such an excellent copy that, with my endorsement, and with my market, I can dispose of it at a good profit just the same."

"Then I suppose you'd best have it."

"Still," Clo continued, "you only have my word for it, and I'm doubtful. So this is what I'd advise you to do. I'll give you the address of a man who knows more about Holbeins than any other man in London. You can take

it to him, and whatever he says you may rely on. His name is Wimpel, and he's on Oxford Street, three doors from Regent."

So, after luncheon, Lord Court took the Holbein to Wimpel, and in less than no time was back with it at the Clothorne Galleries.

"Well?" asked his brother-in-law's kinsman.

"Genuine. One of the finest examples he ever saw."

Clo seemed very much surprised.

"Still," said Lord Court, "I'm all for letting you have it at your figure. The fact is I've an engagement for tea, and, anyhow, you've been so square I think you deserve it. I'll have to take it back to Jamescourt tomorrow, but in the meantime you can keep it for me here, if you will."

"But you promised Biddy, I thought—"

"Yes, I know, but— Well, you were right. It is uncomfortable and I can't be bothered."

"I'll put it in my fireproof," Clo promised.

"And I'll talk it over with Biddy when I'm back; and then we'll have you down again and—well, I fancy you'd better fetch along a certified cheque."

When he had gone Dare Clothorne smiled unctuously and went through the motion of washing his hands in thin air.

"He's as obvious as noonday sun," he said aloud.

There was just one other incident which went to shed some light on the colloquys the next day at Court Castle. It occurred over the tea table at the Savoy.

Charlie Brayen was in high spirits, as usual, and as usual a little boastful. "Swank" was his middle name. He was getting about all out of life there was in it, he confided. And there was a lot in it if one set oneself to find it.

Then, after a bit, something reminded him, and he said:

"Oh, by the way, old chap. Do you remember the girl that night at the Bon Ton who rubbed her powdered arm on your coatsleeve?"

"The Yankee girl?"

"Right-o! You'd never imagine where I saw her last week."

"Here? Having tea?"

"Not a bit of it. Actually coming out of my door just as I was going in."

"Your door!" exclaimed Court. "The door of Brayen House?"

"Yes. Fancy! She'd been having tea with the *mater*. The old girl seems to be going in for Americans of late. She's got something on. I don't know what."

"Perhaps she's hunting an American heiress for me," the heir suggested.

"Oh, I daresay. I never thought of that. Rather ripping, that Yankee flapper! I'm very keen on American girls myself. Can you keep a secret, old top?"

"Rather," said his distant cousin.

"Well, then, I don't mind letting you in on it, seeing that you're of the family. I've married one."

"Married one?"

"Yes. On the quiet, you know. But I'll wager you know who."

But he was wrong there. Lord Court hadn't an idea.

"Why, pretty Polly Pruin, to be sure. She's working for the cinematograph now, and making heaps of money."

Chapter XII

Just how obstinately Lord Court held his own counsel has been pretty clearly indicated. Yet Lady Bridget, who could see as far through a millstone as the next one, was very well assured that so far as the Holbein was concerned, he had indeed made a mess of things. She should have gone up with it herself. Still that would have meant missing the heiress, and that in turn might have meant missing the million pounds sterling. So, everything considered, there was no cause for repining. She might still go up, and she might still get fifty thousand for the portrait—if it was a portrait. But the heiress was by far the bigger fish, and

she believed it better policy to devote all her efforts at present in that direction.

So she ordered bed linen and table linen—not forgetting bath towels—sent down on approval; she got in servants for a week; and she arranged her house party—the first in more years than she cared to count—with the Honorable Mrs. Brayen, Miss Nevada Savage, and Dare Clothorne, Esq., as the honored guests. The latter having been a distinct concession to the noble heir.

It was a prodigious undertaking and it required much planning. It was necessary, for instance, to hint at the American heiress matter, and to hint much more strongly than was warranted by the present status of the case, before she could amply replenish the larder. The tradesfolk were getting in ugly mood again, and she had to go to them armed with more than a mere promise.

The term "American heiress," however, was magical in its effect. They responded to a man, and they responded most generously. Eight at table, three times a day, not counting tea, means something in the way of provender. And there was no lack. There was even wine—a very fair Burgundy—the bars of teetotalism being let down in recognition of the paramount importance of the occasion.

Everyone of the family was on his or her best behaviour. Even the Reverend Thomas, at the first dinner, proved quite chatty, in spite of the presence of his despised second cousin, and in spite of his horror of Miss Savage's frankness. In fact he told an amusing story, or, rather, what he announced in advance, was an "amusing story." It was apropos of the subject of glass, which the heiress had introduced by saying that her father was the author of the bottles the wine was served from.

"But it isn't American wine," Lady Bridget had been prompt to interpose. "It's French."

"I'm not disputing that," said Miss Savage. "But the output of my father's glassworks is like the British Empire. The sun never sets on it."

Whereupon the curate related his incident.

"When I was a little beggar," he began, "I was most confused about glass, and all through having a nursery governess who was uncertain of her aspirates. Each day I had a lesson from a most admirable little book for the inquiring childish mind called 'What, How and Why? I was too young to read myself, don't you know. So the nursery governess read the questions and answers, and I was supposed to commit them to memory. One of the questions was: 'How is glass made?' And the answer, as Susan read it, was: 'By 'eating sand and soda.' It was most perplexing, I assure you. 'What eats it?' I asked. And Susan told me: 'Why, the glass 'eaters, of course, silly.'"

Lady Bridget said afterwards that Thomas's story was an inspiration. It quite relieved the constraint and put everyone at ease. Not that Lord Court required to be so put. To her pleased surprise, he appeared quite serenely composed from the first. But the rest of them had exhibited what appeared to be a mixture of awe and aloofness. It was as if they were overimpressed by the great wealth of their guest and were endeavoring to counteract it by a stimulated sense of their own superior birth and importance.

The truth about the heir was that he realized at once his advantage. For he had recognized Miss Savage directly; but it was evident that she didn't in the least remember him. Later, he meant to recall their meeting to her. But he feared to do so until they were quite alone, lest she impulsively divulge to the others his so-well-guarded secret of the supper club.

He had taken her into dinner; and after dinner was over he was restive during his enforced stay at table with the men while she, with the other ladies, withdrew to the drawing-room. He itched for a *tête-à-tête*. And when the opportunity at length came he seized upon it with prompt eagerness.

"Suppose we go out on the terrace," he said, bending over her. "There's a lovely moon."

As she was very well assured why she had been asked down, this did not in the least surprise her, though she had hardly expected such expedition. Her experience had taught her that Englishmen, as compared with the men of her own country, were a trifle slow. As she was to be there for a week, it would have been much more in keeping with precedent had Lord Court deferred even tentative advances until the latter half at the earliest. His precipitancy pleased her. It was a point in his favor. Still there were lots of other points to be considered.

"Where is the terrace?" she asked, as they paused on a limited square of stone flagging.

"Why, this," he answered. "Don't you have terraces in America?"

"Oh, yes. Only America is so much bigger. Everything is so much bigger there. In America we'd call this the front stoop."

The noble heir didn't quite catch the force of the allusion. He had never heard of a "front stoop" before. But he wasn't given to the "What, How and Why?" habit. Besides, he had something else to talk about.

"I wonder if you can see in the moonlight?" he asked, turning his right shoulder towards her.

"Why, of course," she said, "though your moon isn't as bright as ours. What do you want to show me?"

He held up his right arm.

"Can you see anything on that sleeve?"

"No," she answered after a quick glance. "Is it a hair, or—what?"

"It's your mark," he told her. "I've never been able to get it quite off."

Her big brown eyes opened very wide.

"Good land!" she cried. "Are you one of them. Then we've met before. I haven't an idea where."

"Try to think," he implored.

"Oh, I couldn't. I've marked so many men that way. And it never comes off, does it? That's why I use it. It's perfectly wonderful powder. I'm going to write a testimonial for the manufacturer. Papa's got thousands of voluntary testimonials—unsolicited, you know—about his bottles. They hardly ever crack, you see."

"I—I daresay," mumbled the heir.

"You tell me where it was," she suggested.

"I will if you'll promise not to mention it. I wouldn't have Biddy know for worlds."

"Who's Biddy?" a little suspiciously.

"My sister, Lady Bridget, you know."

"Oh, yes. Well then, I promise."

"At—at the supper club," he whispered.

She looked blank. "Which one?" she asked. "I think I must have been to hundreds. They're such fun, aren't they?"

"Rather." And he stood knitting his brows.

"Which was it?" she repeated.

But Lord Court couldn't remember. "I never was clever at remembering names," he added.

"Then we shall never know where we first met, shall we?"

"No. Too bad. I don't suppose by any chance you remember my face?"

"Remember it?" she cried. "I should say I do. I'll never forget it. The type, I mean. I've met your face everywhere. And there's hardly a variation. It's a most aristocratic face, I'll grant that, in spite of its—its prevalence."

The last of the James-James line didn't know whether to be pleased by this or otherwise. So he took refuge in silence. He no longer felt, though, that he had any distinct advantage over Miss Savage.

Miss Savage, on the whole, found the house party rather dull. The noble heir had by no means lived up to his early promise. He certainly was not precipitate. The week was drawing to a close and he hadn't said the first thing that even savored of a proposal.

The truth was that Lord Court had

been thinking a lot about what the heiress had told him of frequenting supper clubs. He had met some very jolly girls at his one particular supper club, but they weren't exactly the sort he'd care to marry, Charlie Brayen's example to the contrary, notwithstanding.

"It's different," he said to himself, "I being a peer."

Which was really a surprising exhibition of good sense in one so lightly endowed.

However, he ended by taking his problem to Dare Clothorne.

"Old Clo knows a thing or two," he argued, "and I'll be guided by his advice."

And old Clo, who really knew a lot about Americans, made it quite clear to him that they couldn't be judged by British standards.

"American girls," he explained, "have a way of touching pitch without being defiled. They call it 'slumming.' I should say that Miss Savage is a most covetable product of a country that is always turning out desirable articles. Though a dealer in archaic objects, I am not lost to the value of the modern and the new. You can't do better than wed the young woman—*if* she'll have you."

Lord Court was so delighted to be thus relieved of a matter which had been troubling him for days that he at once reverted to the subject of the Holbein.

"I'll tell you, Clo," he said cordially, "I think you are an awfully good sort, don't you know. And I want you to have that precious old master. If I'm going to marry Nevada Savage we'll need some money in advance to do the thing up right, and I'd rather let you have the Holbein at your figure than wait to peddle it about on the chance of getting more. So, if you happen to have that certified cheque in your pocket, here's your opportunity."

Clo had it and lost no time in producing it. That was Thursday. On Friday he departed, taking the Holbein with him. On Saturday the party was to come to an end, and the Honorable Mrs. Brayen and Miss Savage were returning to London.

There was no time to spare, therefore, if the heir was to propose to the heiress before she left. He was a little nervous about it, but he forced himself to the scratch and asked her to walk in the park between tea and dinner.

"If what you call the park is the sea of mud it was when I was last here," she said, "I'd better put on stout boots. I'm liable to lose these slippers and never find them again."

So he waited for her to make the change, which gave him a chance to pull himself together.

Still they walked for a considerable distance before he even broached the subject. They had taken a somewhat roundabout course and had finally reached the fringe of willows which bounded the estate. Somehow the sight of Adolphus's grave inspired the heir with a quickened courage.

"All this that you see, Nevada," he said—and he had never called her Nevada before—"will some day be mine, and so will the title. How would you like to share it with me, and be the Countess of Jamescourt?"

When he had said it, he thought it was done very neatly.

He rather expected her to appear surprised and a little embarrassed; but she was neither, and so she didn't appear so. On the contrary, she was most self-possessed.

She had her hands in the pockets of her jacket, and he had Clo's cheque in the pocket of his; which may have weighed to some extent in maintaining their balance of composure.

She stopped walking and replied promptly.

"I don't know," she said candidly. "I've been thinking. I'm pretty practical and I haven't liked all this about that Holbein."

There she paused, and the heir, seeking fresh reliance, rested his right foot on Adolphus's last resting-place.

"I don't exactly see what anybody should want of a Holbein," she went on, "for he wasn't pretty, and that isn't it either. But if the thing was valuable, I should think you should have acted in one of two ways."

"I did," returned Lord Court. "It was a question whether to let Clo have it or try for a better price elsewhere. I let Clo have it."

But Nevada ignored this.

"Either you ought not to have parted with it at all," she continued, "but hung on to it like grim death and trusted to marrying me and having it for our descendants, or else you ought to have sold it to the highest bidder. And you didn't do either."

Court added his left foot to his right and stood squarely above Adolphus. Then he fixed the lovely American girl with an earnest, serious gaze.

"Fair lady"—it was marvelous how he had hit upon this phrase, seeing that he never read. Perhaps, in some occult way, Adolphus aided—"I'll tell you what not a soul but one man in London and myself know. The picture's a copy—a rank copy—and isn't worth sixpence."

For a full minute Nevada Savage stared at him utterly amazed. She would never have believed it possible. Then a slow smile crept laggardly over her attractive face. Her brown eyes sparkled, her white teeth gleamed between temptingly parted cherry lips.

"I *de*-clare! You're clever after all. I'm *so* surprised. *So* delighted. Why, you'll get on just splendidly with my father."

Lord Court's shoulders squared. He looked almost noble.

"Then you—?" he began eagerly.

But she didn't wait for him to finish.

"Why, of course I will," she answered simply.

* * * *

They are really more wonderful than appears on the surface, the posthumous works of Adolphus in this matter. Lady Bridget holds that they didn't begin to end with just directing her to where the Holbein was hidden. She insists that Adolphus—poor, dear Adolphus—be credited with the entire train of circumstances which started actually with the finding of the Roman vase. Out of that came the finding of Ophelia, and through Ophelia the finding of Nevada. But Nevada still might never have brought her million pounds into the family had it not been for Court taking the Holbein up to London and letting old Clo pull the wool over his eyes. Which, of course, he did. For wasn't it published in all the papers that he sold the Holbein to a Madagascar millionaire nutmeg-grower for fifty thousand pounds? And didn't Court eventually let it slip that the one man in London who "knew" was old Wimpel, of Oxford Street? And didn't the Honorable Mrs. Brayen learn that Wimpel was just a frame-maker and didn't know the difference between a Holbein and a Paolo Veronese? And that in all probability old Clo telephoned him what to say while Court was on his way from the gallery to the shop? And then, as if to bear it all out, wasn't Court standing straight on Adolphus's grave when he spoke the effective, if not romantic, sentence which turned the tide and swept into the James-James coffers the Savage million?

Surely there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in Horatio's, or any other fellow's, philosophy.

CANDIDATES FOR SIBERIA

By Adam Dennis

PEOPLE who run madly across Fifth Avenue when the policeman has stopped all traffic and there is not a motor in sight.

* * *

People who, when you ask them "How are you?", tell you.

* * *

People who upon sitting down at table immediately annex the salt, and henceforth consider it their private property.

People who invite you for week-ends and then put scratchy embroidery on your pillow, and froth at the mouth if you remove a button-hook from the Blue Room to the Pink Room.

* * *

People who indulge in post-mortem raptures over the food they have eaten seventeen and a quarter years ago.

* * *

People who tell you how old their grandfather is.

SONG

By Muna Lee

I HAVE had enough of glamour,
Of dawn and violet dusk and stars,
Of bannered phrases flaming and floating
Over vague and terrible wars.

I am tired of moonlight and the water,
The violins and bugles of youth;
I have had mystery and proud pale sorrow
—Now I should like the truth.

TO speak of love to a woman is to make love to her. Not to speak of it is to affront her. There is no middle course.

LIFE consists very largely in being polite to the sort of man one would not voluntarily select as one's valet.

THE ESCAPE

By Thyra Samter Winslow

TROWBRIDGE read the letter over three times. It seemed incredible to him that, ten minutes ago, before he had read it, he had been absolutely at peace. He hadn't even recognized the writing. Here, Mrs. Clinton Baine, "Esme Rodney Baine" she signed herself, was getting ready to—in fact was probably already in the act of—eloping with him.

It was such an impossible thing. He would have preferred thinking it a practical joke. Yet he knew it was genuine. It was an hysterical letter, just the sort Mrs. Baine would write. It contained such phrases as "so I've decided to break all ties," "the little happiness that we still may get from life, that is our due" and "we can dare laugh at conventions that smaller people have made." It was an unpleasant letter, pale lavender paper, eccentric monogram, large, unformed writing, just what one would expect of Mrs. Baine.

"I know you always week-end at Ponroy when you are alone," Mrs. Baine had written. So she was going there to meet him. Ponroy was Trowbridge's very simple country place, fifty minutes' ride from the Grand Central Station. An old couple who lived in a small caretaker's cottage on the grounds kept it in order. It was a jolly place for lazy summer weeks, quiet week-ends, even informal house parties.

Trowbridge threw the letter on the table and groaned aloud. Here it was Saturday—noon. He hadn't thought of going to Ponroy for the week-end. There were several things he had planned to do in town. Mrs. Baine was already on her way to Ponroy, like as not.

Why had he ever started anything with Mrs. Baine? He had started little enough. Why had he even spoken to her, been civil? There ought to be some way to warn people so they might avoid things like this. Mrs. Baine looked harmless enough. She wasn't very old, around thirty perhaps, but she was the type that looks mature, a little fat dumpling of a woman, with a little round nose and fat cheeks. She had small, rather indefinite eyes and was near-sighted, which made her peer intently at things. Trowbridge even remembered having seen her wearing nose-glasses, occasionally. Women and nose-glasses were the most unromantic combination in the world to him.

He knew that he had kissed Mrs. Baine on exactly three occasions. That was absolutely all. He could remember definite details.

The first kiss was at a dance at the Stuarts. The dance before he had had with Amy Hall, and one always kissed Amy after dancing with her. It was as much the thing to do as getting an ice for Caroline Martin, who always got overheated, or listening to Mrs. Flint-Morris' plans for her next party. Amy was smooth and blonde and cool and fragrant, so one kissed her. Mrs. Baine, coming next, somehow, Trowbridge had kissed her, too. In the big, glassed sunporch it had not seemed an impossible thing, though it had not been especially pleasant. Kisses seldom were. He still remembered that Mrs. Baine's face was too soft and that she used a powder with a disagreeable taste and odor. He had been sorry, a minute afterwards, and wished she had been angry at him. He remembered she

was rather timidly grateful and was annoyed at her and at himself. He had classed her immediately with the stupid "little married people" who go around having unpleasant little affairs, not exciting enough for intrigues, too unfaithful for decency. He had made up his mind to avoid her.

Just a few weeks later he had kissed her again, at the Boardman's. The party was a bore, but he had got into it and didn't know how to get out. Coming down the long hall, Esme Baine and he had taken arms and pretended to skip, childishly. He was thirty-two and should have known better. One arm was around her waist. He preferred to think that Esme Baine had kissed him. He wasn't sure. He was sure about the third time.

She had come to his apartment. He didn't like that. He never asked women to his apartment. When he wanted to see them, he went out and saw them. When he was at home he wanted to be let alone. From women, anyhow.

Mrs. Baine had called. It was around nine, one evening, just as he had started reading a book he was interested in. Felix announced her. He had put down the book and groaned,

"Let her in."

Mrs. Baine had come in, fluttering in an all-enveloping cape that made her resemble a big brown owl. She had been giggling and embarrassed and nervous and almost in tears.

Clifton Baine didn't love her any more—he was cruel to her and they had fights—over money. And—she didn't love him any more. He was indifferent—and—cross. He—he didn't—understand. The finer things—the things that were—deep—he didn't get at all.

Trowbridge had tried rather hard to do the right things. She had taken it so for granted that he cared about her that he couldn't tell her he didn't. So he had talked about not having everything—dreams must suffice when realities press hard—that she was a brave little thing and must keep on being brave. He had told her that her reputation meant a great deal; she mustn't come to his apartment any more; she must pretend to be happy—and maybe she could, finally, get a little happiness out of things.

II

He had been immensely relieved when she had gone. He felt as if he were a surgeon who had achieved rather a neat operation. He had thought the affair was over. Mrs. Baine was a silly, romantic sentimental little thing. It was a piece of hard luck that she had fastened her gummy affections upon him. But he had ducked from under and had allowed her to get out of it without any hurt feelings. He was even boastful to himself. Other men might have messed the thing.

Trowbridge liked Baine and was sorry for him because he was married to such a brainless little thing, without honor or reserve or pride. Baine was steady-going, decent, a gentleman. He even seemed unbelievably fond of his wife.

In business, too, Trowbridge came in close contact with Baine. He didn't want him to get angry. It was rather important. But there was more than that. He actually liked the man. He didn't want Baine's wife. He didn't want Baine to think that he did. He didn't want a secret affair. He didn't want scenes. He didn't want to elope with anyone, least of all Mrs. Baine.

Trowbridge was always quite grateful to chance or Providence or whatever had allowed him to remain single. He had had a few narrow escapes and he had learned wariness. He wasn't a conceited fool who felt that every woman wanted to marry him. But he couldn't help knowing that a few did want to—though quite likely they would have taken any other fair substitute. He wasn't exactly bad looking in a lean sort of way and women were always telling him things about his eyes. He had enough money to live comfortably and he was presentable enough to be "my husband" without accompanying

blushes. Trowbridge didn't want to marry. He didn't even want affairs. But, he felt if he did want them he could do his own choosing.

Now—Mrs. Baine. Mrs. Baine had no qualities to speak of. She was a blank, any way you added things up. One couldn't be a beast, even to her. It might even mean a scandal, ugly things and matrimony in the end. Being married to Mrs. Baine!

He'd have to do something right away. Mrs. Baine might be leaving this minute. There were so few possible solutions. He could refuse to go to Ponroy at all. Then Mrs. Blaine would be hurt, humiliated. That would mean she would say things to make Baine angry, things only a woman can say, with such a foundation. It wasn't a real way out, anyhow.

Or he could go to Ponroy and persuade Mrs. Baine to come back. But, hadn't he used up all of his arguments when she had called? That wouldn't do. She probably wouldn't come back. There'd be a scene. She was there—she'd stay there. He couldn't settle things that way.

If he did go and week-end with Mrs. Baine, that wouldn't settle anything. It wasn't the moral part of it he minded. Only he didn't like affairs unless his heart was there, too. Then they were worth being punished for, later. But Mrs. Blaine wouldn't return after a week-end. She'd want to stay—a divorce—months of agony—marriage. That was the worst possibility.

He rang up the Baine home. He had never telephoned there before. He had found Baine at his office when he wanted him. He had never wanted to find Mrs. Baine. The maid who answered the telephone told him that Mrs. Baine was not at home.

"She left about an hour ago. She left no message for anyone."

So—Mrs. Baine was already on her way to Ponroy. And it took just fifty minutes to get there!

He telephoned to Ponroy. It seemed an hour before he heard the welcome, "Here's your party."

Mrs. Moran was at the telephone. No, there was no one there. A lady coming? All right, she'd make her comfortable, though she wished she had known about it before. There weren't many provisions and it was a long walk to the village.

Then Trowbridge had an idea. He clutched at it.

"Mrs. Moran," he said, "I've just made up my mind, rather suddenly. I'm bringing out a few friends—informal little week-end party. Don't bother about anything. I'll bring Felix out with me and plenty of things to eat. I'll be out as soon as I can. And, the guest that's coming early, give her the blue room and make her feel at home, won't you?"

The good old soul! He could see Mrs. Moran's wrinkled, puzzled little face. She was a good cook, too. Ponroy would be lovely just now. Maybe it was a good idea, after all.

He telephoned Mrs. Cordell—if she and Fred . . . But the Cordells were week-ending with the Bishops on Long Island. The Phillips were awfully sorry, but they had guests in town, from Boston.

He found two single men, glad enough for invitations and the Cunningham sisters, little blonde chirpy things. There must be someone else, another couple, to round things out. It had to be liveable. After all, he was going to be there.

Then he thought of Mrs. Blanchard. He had always been a little afraid of Mrs. Blanchard. She looked vaguely like the villainess in an old melodrama, tall, dark, slender. She wore slinky, clingy things and talked in deep, low monotones. But he knew you couldn't go by types. Mrs. Blanchard was probably devoted to Carney Blanchard. Why not? Blanchard was a man any woman might care for, a wizard in business. Why, he'd practically got control of Trowbridge's own firm in the last six months, though it didn't interest him, at all. A fine fellow, too. He was glad he and Blanchard seemed to like each other. Of course he'd been wrong

about Mrs. Blanchard. It is the little round women who start things. He knew that, now.

He got Mrs. Blanchard on the telephone. Her first name, he remembered, was Gilda. It pleased him. Though he had never called her by it before, he found himself using it.

"Just a sudden notion of mine, Gilda," he said. "You know my ramshackle old Ponroy seems just calling for guests. Just this minute it came to me how much jollier it would be than a planned thing, only a few of us. Oh, the Cunningham girls and young Hardy and Mrs. Baine. . . . Oh, I thought she'd be a good chaperon. You do?"

He laughed contentedly. After all, Gilda Blanchard was rather interesting. He'd probably been mistaken about her being intense. It had pleased her, about Mrs. Baine, for Mrs. Baine was probably her age or younger.

Mrs. Blanchard accepted. Carney was in Philadelphia—if she might come alone . . . ?

Trowbridge hung up the receiver with a feeling of relief. It was all settled. He'd get there right away. The others would come later. He'd have a serious talk with Esme Baine and then they'd have a nice week-end, all jolly little friends. It was the best way, the only way, of course.

Trowbridge gave Felix a list of things he'd need and told him to come out on one of the later trains. Felix was good at hurry-up things. There would be plenty to eat. After all, the quickness of the affair would make his guests forgive anything wrong, most of them were grateful for the invitation.

Then, suddenly, it came to him that Esne Baine, in her bromidic stupid way, would have left, for Baine's perusal, a silly blurb of a note. He could almost see it, lavender and square, on Baine's dresser or his pillow.

He must get that letter. You can't pass a thing like that off as a joke.

He had been to the Baine's home on a few occasions. He would stop there, now, on the way to the train.

The Baines lived in a three-story, white stone house in the East Sixties. How like Mrs. Baine it was, conventional, stupid, expensive. The butler was strange to Trowbridge. There was no chance for a breezy comment, a running up to Baine's room. One can't throttle a butler easily.

No. Mr. Baine was not at home. He might come in at any time. Mrs. Baine was not at home. Almost, Trowbridge felt the door close, as if he were a book-agent.

"Oh, yes," he said, suddenly, as if it had just occurred to him, "take me to Mr. Baine's rooms, please. Last time I was here he had some special headache drops he gave me. In his bathroom, I think. Forgot the name, I'll go on and find them."

He knew the story was poor. He felt the man's disapproval. But he hurried past him, up the stairs. He hardly knew Baine's room. He guessed it must be the second one, Mrs. Baine would take the front room, unless there was an upstairs lounge room, and the house didn't look large enough for that.

The butler followed him. He went into the second bedroom. It was undoubtedly Baine's. There was no letter in sight. The butler opened the door to the bathroom.

"Thank you," said Trowbridge, and made a pretense of finding something in the white medicine cabinet. There were few things there—a bottle of peroxide, a heap of razor blades, some adhesive plaster, nothing resembling headache powders.

He fumbled with things, waiting. The door bell rang. The butler hesitated, then took a chance and went to answer it. Trowbridge darted into the bedroom, looked around again. There was no note. Had this been a stupid, unnecessary trip, after all? Still, Esne Baine was the note-writing kind.

The butler was at the door, now. Another minute——

The pillow, that was it, of course.

Where the servants wouldn't see. Trowbridge's fingers were under the spread, under the pillow, found a crisp, square envelope. It was in his pocket. He turned around. Baine stood in the doorway.

"Johnson told me I had a caller," he said.

Trowbridge felt his knees weaken. He clutched the bed-cover.

"I'm nearly all here," he said, and tried to laugh.

"You see, I have a rotten, nervous headache. The other day, someone, Gleason, it must have been, gave me a powder for it. Don't know how it occurred to me it was you. Just started getting dizzy—afraid I'd have to lie down—no, not a thing. Better, much better, now—fact is, I came in to ask you to week-end with me at Ponroy. Got Mrs. Baine on the 'phone this morning and she said she'd come out late this afternoon, after some charity work she had to do. Just a few people. Oh, my head—I'll get something for it at the drug store. Have 'em often—one in half an hour."

He felt genuinely ill. But a few minutes later, Baine had given him something pleasant to drink and had consented to come out to Ponroy on a later train. Trowbridge got out of the house feeling as if he had made rather a decent job of it.

He read the letter on the train. It reeked with sentiment and easy tears. Anyhow, he had found it.

III.

He ran all the way to the house, when the train finally reached his station. Mrs. Baine was there, lying on the couch in the living room. She had been crying. Trowbridge could see that she was frightened and a little sorry that she had come.

She threw her arms around him and he saw that they were too fat and soft. He pushed her away as gently as he could.

He found himself soothing her, reasoning. There were no kisses. He was careful of that.

Half an hour later he was calling her a brave little woman, telling her, again, that they must bear up, for convention must be satisfied, she was too noble to yield weakly to things to which other less superior women might yield. They could always have their—dreams. The house-party was a surprise—for her—to show her that he cared for her pleasure—to keep her from doing something she would regret, forever. They must never see each other alone, again. But, always, they could remember how pleasant had been the moments they had spent together——

The others came on the six-eighteen. Felix brought food and drink. Mrs. Moran in the kitchen, cooked up good old-fashioned dishes. There was a jolly evening of bridge and dancing and singing to the out-of-tune piano. The guests went to bed rather early. Alone in the living room, Trowbridge lit a cigar, stretched out his legs and smiled. He was happy again.

After all, he was a diplomat. Baine might think his actions a little queer, but he'd never suspect. Mrs. Baine thought she was loved—that she had had an adventure—her pride was not hurt. He never need see her again. The house party was passing off pleasantly enough. He drew a deep breath. So, this time——

Hands were over his eyes. Someone had stolen into the living room. He heard a deep, soft laugh. The hands went around his neck. A woman slid down to the rug at his side.

"It's Gilda," she said. "How wonderfully sweet of you to plan this party for me. For weeks I've seen what you've thought of me"—her voice was low, throaty, toneless—"now, out here, it seems as if we were all alone. The others, the necessary lay-figures, a sop to the world we must live in! Lee, you're a dear, dear boy," and her arms crept around him . . .

THE PROFESSOR

By Harry Kemp

THE signshifter reappeared with his multitude of brass buttons and his pouter-pigeon chest and deftly inserted a card which read:

Professor Vertigo, Acrobatic Pianist.

This immediately caught the fancy of the audience and they began to applaud before the curtain rose on the act. And when it drew up and Professor Vertigo himself shot across the stage, fell prone on the floor, got up again, and slid all the way to the piano stool, still in wild disequilibrium, the applause became thunderous.

Then the Professor began . . . and over and over again he fell off his seat . . . now reaching up from the floor and keeping the music going . . . now using his heels . . . now his hands . . . and now he finished a crashing composition of Wagner's by bringing his head down on the keyboard with a prodigious bump. And all the while he played in excellent tempo and never hit a wrong note. The Professor got five encores and six curtain calls before he was allowed to bow himself out.

* * * *

That night, over several bottles of beer, he told me about himself and his career.

"Yes, in Europe I studied under all the great masters of the art," he said, "to come back to America myself an acknowledged master, and with what seemed an assured future before me. . . . Yet, somehow, in spite of my greatness, I failed at concert after concert. But one night I met with an accident that definitely turned my career toward vaudeville. It was in Boston. In the midst of an exquisite etude of my own composing which was, nevertheless, only producing yawns among my hostile and meagre audience, suddenly my piano stool slid from under me. As luck would have it, strangely enough my head, in hitting the keyboard, struck the correct chord to follow. The effect was startling and instantaneous. To my amazement a great wave of enthusiastic applause swept the house. And from that time on, though I played the same as before, even that cold, critical Boston audience was with me. . . . This set me thinking. And so, to make a long story short, you find me today in vaudeville, one of the highest-paid artists in the profession."

"But, my dear Professor," I could not help interjecting, "how about your artistic conscience?"

"Oh, my conscience is clear—even as it is I give the people nothing but classical music by the greatest composers!"

RETRIBUTION AND MRS. MEYRICK

By Stephen McKenna

I

"I KNOW I'm late. Don't be angry with me!" pleaded Mrs. Meyrick pathetically, as her brother-in-law looked reproachfully at his watch and led her into the restaurant.

Eight years of married life, a husband whom she ruled autocratically and four children who ruled her as autocratically, had left her with the air, appearance and triumphant methods of an irreclaimable *ingénue*. Being twenty-eight, she looked eighteen. Being fearless and never at a loss, she contrived to make her grey-green, kitten's eyes timid and a little helpless. Being, as her brother-in-law had insisted for ten years, soulless and without scruple, she dressed and talked (and did her hair with an engaging boyish sweep over one eye) and got herself into scrapes from which he had to extricate her, as though she were a trusting child of nine, lost and benighted on the way home from her first party—("Where you would get the best present from the Christmas tree, my dear," Harry would say, "and steal three other children's crackers and make the conjuror look a fool and take away the reputation of all the little boys as soon as the magic-lantern got to work").

"The show starts at eight, that's all," he said. "*I* don't mind, because I've seen it."

"And I don't want to see it!" Mrs. Meyrick pressed both hands to her eyes and shuddered. "I never want to *see* anything, *do* anything" . . . !

She turned with the frightened movement of a hunted animal. "Change places with me, Harry. I don't want to be overheard."

Captain Meyrick got up with a look of adequate concern at her white face and worried eyes.

"What's wrong, Sybil," he asked gently. "No bad news . . . ?"

"About Tom? Oh, he's all right, bless him! I heard this morning. Leave's started again. He—he may be home any day!" she exclaimed hysterically.

"And the boys?" he enquired, boring his way relentlessly through the family.

"Oh, it isn't that! It's me, all me! My fault. I'm responsible. But I *don't* deserve it!"

Harry Meyrick dealt quickly and efficiently with the wine-waiter and plied his sister-in-law with food.

"If you feel you'd like to tell me" . . . he began without undue sympathy. "Take your time. Have something to eat first. Any advice, you know . . . I'm quite discreet, when I try. And Tom told you to come to me for help, if you got yourself into a hole—I'll see you through, Sybil. You'd make me, even if I didn't want to."

Gratitude struggled with doubt in her eyes.

"I wonder," she murmured. "Or Tom either. But it was years ago, before I knew either of you—ten years, I should think. And now it's come back to spoil my life, all our lives!"

"You'd better tell me the whole story," he suggested, settling comfortably to his belated dinner and refusing to be stampeded into the theatrical.

From her inside seat at the corner table she scanned every face within her field of vision. When she had fin-

ished her inspection of the crowded restaurant, she smiled for the first time and sighed a little with relief.

"It was before I married," she began defensively. "You know how I love music? Well, I lived in rather a musical set, and, in between concerts and when there was no opera, we all used to discover promising young geniuses and give parties to show them off and buy rows and rows of seats at the Steinway for their public *débuts* —we were very earnest and rather precious. Lady Pagdon was the moving spirit, and mother used to take me, and there was Betty Cronshaw and Felicity Roxbourne and about a dozen more. It wasn't good music, but we were so enthusiastic and, when we heard something that was quite intolerable, we used to say that we didn't quite understand it *yet*, but that we must educate ourselves up to it."

"I'm glad I didn't know you in those days," said Meyrick.

"Tom married me in spite of it," she retorted. "You see, it wasn't *only* that. I was quite pretty in those days and I knew how to dress, and a lot of men, who didn't really care for music a bit . . ."

She spoke like a nonogenarian describing incredible charms to an incredulous posterity.

"I can understand it perfectly well. I don't really care for the Russian Ballet a bit, but here I am—"

"Dear Harry!" she smiled, laying her hand on his wrist. "You do love me, don't you?"

"I don't see how that comes into it."

"Because I need your help, dear. Where had I got to? Oh, yes. Well, one winter Lady Pagdon discovered not one genius but four—a string quartet. Unlike her other geniuses they played really well, which was a pleasant change; but they required to be paid, Lady Pagdon's patronage wasn't enough in itself. That wasn't so pleasant, but we arranged to give parties in turn. A little musical club, you know, meeting every Tuesday in one another's houses, each one paying the quartet—"

"Cake and lemonade at half-past ten. And no smoking," interrupted Meyrick.

"Why do men always think of their stomachs?" she enquired, turning to see who had spirited away the caviar.

"Some one has to, and women always neglect them. Go on with your story."

"Well. This went on all through one winter, and at the end I got an extraordinary note from Lady Pagdon. Would I make time to go and see poor George Paynter? He was terribly ill with something awful like cancer—agonising pain, living under morphia and—always calling for *me!* I've never been so surprised in my life! I'd never heard of him. However, I went round to Lady Pagdon, and she told me that he was a member of our little club and described him and said that he'd fallen in love with me. Then I *did* remember a very delicate-looking young man—these meetings just took place in our drawing-rooms, you found a chair as best you could; I always made for the fire, and this young man always got wedged between my chair and the coal-box. He never said anything, never even offered me a glass of lemonade, but, if ever I looked up, he blushed furiously and turned away—"

"And did you look up often?"

"I behaved with perfect decorum," said Mrs. Meyrick. "He was a dreadfully plain young man," she added wistfully. "Still, when Lady Pagdon asked me to go. . . . Mother came with me, of course, but he was much too bad to see anyone. We went to a little house in St. John's Wood, and his poor mother came and cried over us, and it was perfectly heartbreaking. She was a widow, he was the only son; and the doctor had said he couldn't live a month. She told us that he held some post in, I think, the Canton and Hankow Bank and had been sent home on account of his health. . . . All the time she was telling us, we could hear

him groaning upstairs. . . . The directors were behaving very well, paying his salary and all the medical expenses; he'd been under treatment for about eight months and then he'd suddenly got worse. And he was going to die. . . . And he kept calling for me."

Mrs. Meyrick's eyes became soft at the memory.

"I was—eighteen. Whatever age I'd been, I should have been enormously touched. I *have* a heart, Harry—"

"The woman who talks about her virtue lays herself open to suspicion," he drawled.

"I wonder what would have happened if I'd married you instead of Tom. You'd have been a different man," she said menacingly.

"And so would Tom. We seem to be losing sight of Mr. George Paynter."

II

Mrs. Meyrick returned to her story like a hound flogged off a more attractive scent, wondering with a glint under her black eyelashes whether it was worth while to make another bolt.

"Well, I asked the poor woman what I could do," she resumed. "She suggested I might send him a little note occasionally. I wrote. . . . I wrote every day. I wrote some wonderful letters. Harry, give me a little credit for this! Every day I took him flowers, every day I wrote. When I went to stay with people I used to walk alone in the woods, picking him little bunches of violets—"

"And describing it fully. I'm sure you were artistic, Sybil."

She sighed reproachfully.

"Aren't you rather unkind to me? I *was* sorry for him. . . . One day he was better; I got a pencilled note 'Thank God for you!' . . . But he got worse again. I said something in one of my letters about pain, and he wrote back that he could bear any pain so long as he knew that I was thinking of him and being sorry for him. It was dreadful! The doctor'd said he couldn't live more than a month, and the month was nearly up. *He* kept thinking he was going to get well, so of course I played up to him. . . . It's very hard writing daily to a person you don't know. I worked the musical business to death, I told him everything I was doing. . . . Twice I called, and his mother told me the second time that he was dying. I simply redoubled my efforts! The winter was over, and I used to write and suggest concerts for the next winter; should we have the Hungarian quartet again? He and I must go and hear a new 'cellist who was coming to London. I—I entered into the spirit of it, Harry. I made the most wonderful plans for all the things we would do together when he was well. It quite wore me out."

She emptied her glass of champagne and pushed it a suggestive inch forward.

"The great artist never spares himself," said Harry, accepting the suggestion.

"The great artist simply runs dry sometimes," she rejoined. "I remember sitting before a blank sheet of paper with a pen that wouldn't even start writing. . . . I put poor George Paynter on one side and looked at my other letters. Mother was abroad at this time and—I suppose you've never had a letter from mother? She rather lets herself go; when she was quite young someone told her that she had a wonderful power of graphic description, and poor mother has never really recovered. She described with the fervour of Byron and the particularity of Baedeker. I hated her letters—until I saw how useful they were going to be."

She paused as though a twinge of conscience were hurting her.

"It was very late at night," she went on. "And—I've got more Byron than Baedeker. Poor George Paynter and I had exhausted the possibilities of plan-making in England. I plagiarised mother a little. . . . I said that when

he was well (and I was *so* impatient with him for not getting well!) we must make up a little party and all go abroad together. I described the orange trees on the Riviera—and the two of us walking by moonlight through the Forum—and the Dalmatian coast—and the approach to Corfu—and the 'violet crown' of Athens—and Constantinople at daybreak, as you see the minarets like slender fingers pointing to Heaven . . . and the mosques . . . and the ships of all the world, as you round the Golden Horn!"

She paused breathlessly and asked for a cigarette.

"You said it was your mother who let graphic description run away with her?" asked Meyrick.

"I suppose I was carried away. It went to my head. When next I called in St. John's Wood, I confess I was rather frightened, but the poor boy's mother told me that my letters did him so much good, he looked forward to them so much, they were all he had, no one else was allowed to see them, he treasured them under his pillow. . . . I rather wished he didn't treasure them under his pillow! Having once started, I hadn't the heart to stop, though. I went on writing for another month. Then his mother came to tell me that the doctors were going to try one last thing—some new treatment which had been invented by an Austrian. There was everything to gain, for the directors of the bank were still paying all expenses—I rather wanted to meet those directors; I felt we had a bond!—, and he was being taken to Vienna, if he showed a flicker of improvement to carry him over the journey. The next time I went to St. John's Wood the house was empty."

Harry Meyrick looked at his watch and ordered coffee.

"Ought we to be starting?" she asked.

"One can go to the Russian Ballet any time," he answered. "I won't be hurried over my brandy; and it was your fault for being late."

The early wistfulness returned to her aid at the reproach.

"It was hardly my fault, Harry. I was dressing—you like my frock, don't you?—and a maid came in to say that a gentleman wanted to see me. He wouldn't give any name, but he said he'd landed in England that day and would be very grateful if I could spare him five minutes. Of course, I made certain that Tom had been killed and that this was a brother-officer who'd come to prepare me! I raced down to the drawing-room and found a middle-aged man leaning over the piano and looking at the photographs of my children.

" 'You don't remember me,—Mrs. Meyrick?' he said. 'I should have known you anywhere!'

"I had a careful look at him. He was rather red and fat, the sort of thing you see on race-courses, Harry. I think he was wearing checks, and I know he *reeked* of strong cigars. Tall, black-haired, but he was going bald. Aggressively healthy," she added indignantly; "the sort of man who has a cold bath in the morning—and sings in it—and tells you all about it as he sits down to a perfectly disgusting breakfast. I said,

" 'I'm afraid I don't.'

"I'd been staring at him, so I suppose he was entitled to stare at me. When he'd finished with me, he stared round the room and then went back to the photographs. It was frightening, Harry! If only he'd said anything!

" 'You wanted to see me?' I asked, when I could stand it no longer.

" 'Are these the kiddies?' he said without turning round.

" 'They're my children,' I told him. I thought he must be mad; and I suddenly remembered that the bell was out of order. . . .

"Then he pulled himself up from the piano and spun around, all in one movement.

" 'My name's Paynter,' he said. 'George Paynter. You remember now?'

" 'I'm afraid I don't,' I said.

"He began turning over a big volume of old English songs.

"'You keep up your music, then? I've dropped mine. Haven't had time, you know. I still go to hear all I can. I looked in to see if you'd come to the Imperial Theatre with me. There's a little girl singing there . . . Marjorie Fordyce. I met her in Sydney, and we became rather pals. Now I hear she's the rage of London. You're engaged, to judge by your clothes. Perhaps you could come to the matinée tomorrow.' Then he suddenly beamed at me. 'Mrs. Meyrick, have you forgotten me? We never spoke—unless you believe the parties who talk about the language of the eyes—, but we met a good many times. At Lady Pagdon's? It was from her I got your address—and heard—you were married. Ten years ago. I was a sick man then, but they've cured me, and I've done well. Manager in Swatow, Assistant-Manager in Shanghai, Manager in Sydney—and now they've sent me to the Head Office, and I'm a fixture in England. I've not forgotten you, Miss Robson—Mrs. Meyrick, I should say. Or the letters you wrote me. . . . You saved my life. . . . There's many a time I've thought over the things you planned to do. D'ye remember our little tour that we were to take—Constantinople, Rome, Athens? D'ye remember all that part about "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome"? You pictured us standing in the Forum by moonlight, reverently bare-headed to the dead splendours and majesty of Imperial Rome. I reckon I know your letters by heart, Miss Robson. Sometimes I thought of writing you a word, but I wasn't in a position to say anything till now. A man can't ask a gal to leave her friends and settle in Swatow—to be shifted to Hong Kong or Sumatra before she's been there six months. I felt I must wait until I'd found a billet at home.'"

Harry Meyrick listened gravely and with mixed feelings. The recital inspired an entirely legitimate hope that retribution, for all its lame foot, had overtaken his nimble sister-in-law; it also inspired the experienced certainty that she would try to use him as agent, accomplice, buffer, shield and, in the last resort, whipping-boy.

"And then?" he enquired unsympathetically.

"Oh, Harry, do be nice to me! It was such a *shock!* First of all, meeting him at all and then finding what he'd grown into! Of course I'm very glad he *didn't* die, but oh! I wish he had. He was like a—a butcher," she whispered. "To think of the letters I wrote him, the music I talked! My dear, judging from appearances, you'd say a coon-band would be rather over his head. And he's here in London! He's going to live and die here—or rather he won't die; he's played that trick once too often, he won't take me in again. And he's got all my letters, tied up in pink ribbon and covered with mutton-fat!" she exclaimed, hysterically allowing the butcher suggestion to get the better of her.

"But what have you done with him? Apparently you refused to go to the theatre with him. I knew there must be some reason for your keeping your promise to dine with me."

Mrs. Meyrick again pressed her hands despairingly to her eyes.

"I don't know what I said! Oh, I was surprised—and delighted that he was well again—and very glad to see him—and I hoped his mother was well.

". . . (She wasn't. She'd been dead five years. I felt that was so characteristic of them as a family!) I said my husband was at the Front; otherwise he'd have loved to meet such an old friend of mine. . . . And then I ran away, Harry! It was frightfully rude, but my nerve broke. I said I was late for dinner and I couldn't come to hear his wretched Marjorie Fordyce tonight *or* tomorrow or any other night. And then I left him in possession. He was standing with his back to the fire positively gaping love at me!"

Meyrick twisted his cigar reflec-

tively from one side of his mouth to the other.

"You'll probably find him there when you get back," he suggested. "You can apologise then for being a little unceremonious."

"But I don't want to apologise! I don't want to set eyes on him again! Harry, if you honestly mean that I'm going to find him there—"

"He seems a man of laudable constancy," Meyrick pointed out.

"But, idiot Harry, I told him I was married!"

"Perhaps he, too, judged by appearances. After all, I've only your word for it that he's a butcher."

"You'll have to come home with me and turn him out."

"But you led me to understand that he is rather powerfully built. I'm still rather a crock, Sybil."

"You're a coward!" she exclaimed scornfully. "I'm glad I didn't marry you." Harry Meyrick smiled to himself.

"I'm disposed to echo the sentiment. When your friend Paynter gets to work with those letters. . . . Poor Tom! Tom's a good fellow, though he is my brother. It seems a bit rough on him."

Mrs. Meyrick leaned appealingly across the table, and her eyes were suddenly dim with tears.

"Harry, please come home with me! I'm frightened of that man! I am really!"

Meyrick appraised the tears at their market value for both of them.

"Well, if I do, will you lunch with me tomorrow? It's my last day before being pushed off on light duty."

"You make capital out of my misfortunes?" she demanded with pursed lips.

"I try to profit by nine years of education at your hands."

III

THE following day Harry Meyrick and his sister-in-law drifted slowly down the Strand towards Trafalgar Square, lazily waving umbrellas at taxis already occupied. They had lunched pleasurably and amicably at the Savoy and had nothing to do until dinner. Both felt, that, if they found a disengaged taxi, force of external circumstance would compel them to suggest a destination.

"We might look in for the last half hour at the Coliseum," said Harry.

"There'd be only two stalls left, and George Paynter would have one next us," said Sybil with a shudder.

"You've got him on the brain," he expostulated. "When we got home last night, he *wasn't* there. He hasn't written—or telephoned or called again. I expect he's a decent fellow, and he sees that the only thing is to make himself scarce."

Mrs. Meyrick shook her head and slipped her hand under his arm.

"*I* saw him, Harry. And I'm a woman. You really, really must believe me. . . . I felt sorry for him! He's hopelessly in love with me—quite hopelessly! I think it's so wonderful," she went on dreamily. "Ten years! Never forgetting, never faltering! I I wish I were a man. And when Celia Pagdon told him I was married. . . . He still came with—what's the phrase? 'a stiff upper lip.' He behaved awfully well, Harry. I wish I could do something for him. . . . Of course, he *looks* much older, but he's only my age; and all last night I thought of him lying and feeling that he'd lost the one thing that mattered . . . after ten years. . . . You think I've no heart—"

"Please!"

"Well, you do!" she pouted. "I've had my troubles, Harry, and they've made me sympathetic. I thought of him going to sleep, as he's done for ten years, thinking of me; and then, instead of *hoping* for me when he woke up—perhaps he dropped off to sleep again . . . and woke up again, and then there was the same stab. And so it'll always be. . . . And he was so plucky about it last night! I didn't care if he did look and talk like a butcher; I felt he was—a great lover.

I wish I could do something for him," she repeated.

"Of course, he *has* still got the letters," Harry refreshed her memory.

At the end of Northumberland Avenue they stepped back to avoid a tidal wave of white carnations which swept forward at the impulse of a florid man in a black and white check suit, who peeped anxiously between their nodding heads like a Zulu taking cover in high grass. Mrs. Meyrick gripped her brother-in-law's arm and slipped half behind him.

"Miss Robson!" cried a rich voice. "Mrs. Meyrick, I should say . . . a happy meeting! Your husband?"

"My brother-in-law, Captain Meyrick," whispered Sybil. "Harry, you—you've often heard me speak of Mr. Paynter. . . . He's—he's just got back to England after—ten years, is it?"

The two men exchanged a pecking nod, curious on Harry's side and wholly indifferent on Paynter's.

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, sir," he said and turned at once to Mrs. Meyrick.

"Now, are you doing anything?" he asked persuasively. "I've got a box at the Imperial and I'd dearly like you to hear that little girl I was telling you about last night—Marjorie Fordyce. Her turn's at four. She had supper with me, and I promised to come along and bring a few flowers." He smiled radiantly. "She's a sweet girl; I'd like you to meet her, Mrs. Meyrick. I heard her sing in Sydney five years ago and somehow I've had her voice—singing to me, you know—ever since. Won't you come? There's room and to spare."

Mrs. Meyrick shook her head sorrowfully.

"We're just on our way to the Coliseum," she explained. "It's very kind of you—"

"Can you come tonight?" he asked with eager inspiration. "I'm going again."

"I'm going to the Russian ballet tonight. And I'm leaving London tomorrow. I'm so sorry."

"The loss is mine," said Paynter heartily.

He hesitated, but decided that anything else would spoil the effect. "So sorry! Good-bye! Mustn't be late for Marjorie's turn, you know."

He disengaged one hand from its burden of carnations, raised his hat with the gesture of a music-hall comedian and strode into the Strand. Mrs. Meyrick watched his departing broad back in silence until her brother-in-law turned a choking laugh into a cough.

"You don't really want to go to the Coliseum, do you?" he asked. "Let's charter this taxi and tell him to drive us to Hampton Court or Stonehenge. I'm so glad, Sybil! It must be such a weight off your mind! You needn't bother about the letters—or about him. And I needn't bother about you—or poor Tom."

Mrs. Meyrick turned an angry, disfigured white face to him.

"Poor Tom? I'm glad I married him, Harry! *He* wouldn't have stood by grinning while I was *insulted?*"

"You're a remarkable woman, Sybil," said Meyrick reflectively. "But you're a more remarkable wife."

CONSCIENCE is an uneasy feeling that some one will blab.

THE SUPERIORITY OF A SHORT WOMAN

By J. Reginald Dane

I LIKE to dance with a short woman.

* * *

When I dance with a tall woman her lips are alluringly close.

A tall woman is as graceful as a slender reed swaying in the wind.

It exhilarates me to gaze into the tempting green depths of her eyes on a level with my own.

Her breath brushing across my cheek intoxicates me.

Sometimes her cheek touches mine and often her hair lingers against my lips.

But I do not care to dance with a tall woman.

* * *

I like to dance with a short woman because I know she can't flirt with some other man over my shoulder.

THERE WAS A KING IN EGYPT

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

THERE was a king in Egypt
  There was a queen in Gaul . . .
The winds blow up from Asia—
  Lady, can you recall?

Lady, can you remember
  The desert wraiths that came
Spectral and strange at dew-fall
  To shake us like a flame?

There was the throne of cedar,
  A symbol and a threat,
Known of the purple Caesars—
  Lady, can *you* forget?

There was a king in Egypt,
  There was a queen in Gaul . . .
And men have heard of beauty
  Beyond the Roman wall!

ENCHANTERS OF MEN*

III

An Uncrowned Empress

By Thornton Hall

ABNORMAL as a man, the first Napoleon was still more abnormal as a lover. With the hot blood of Corsica in his veins, love was as necessary to him as the air he breathed. Had he been cast in the mould of the Louis, his predecessors on the throne of France, it would have been his chief and most absorbing occupation. But Napoleon had a much more serious mission in life than dancing attendance on women, however alluring; thus passion was seldom more than a feverish incident in a strenuous career.

"He wasted little time in dalliance," M. Masson tells us. "His wooing was abrupt and peremptory. He has been called brutal, where, perhaps, he might more justly be described as hurried and preoccupied. He took such distractions hastily, as he took his meals."

One after another he drew to his arms, in quick succession, the most beautiful women of his day, from Madame Fourés, the lovely ex-milliner's apprentice, to Eléonore Denuelle, "the brunette with the most glorious eyes in France." Half-a-hundred women, frail as fair—ladies of the Court and ladies of the stage—reigned in turn as short-lived mistresses of Europe's master; and each of them, with few exceptions, he regarded as the plaything of an hour, to be put aside the moment a successor took his fancy.

He himself confesses, "I never was in love, except perhaps with Josephine—a little. For Marie Louise I had—a sincere affection." Indeed the method of his wooing was dictated by passion and not by love; he brought to it the unbending will and fierce onslaught which inspired his campaigns. "Monster," "Horrible Tyrant" are the epithets applied to him by Madame Brancher, Mademoiselle Duchesnois, Thérèse Bourgoin, Leverd of the Théâtre Française and the ladies of the Court whom his caprice had seemed to distinguish for an instant. There is, in fact, overwhelming proof that Napoleon inspired more fear than affection in most of the women who thought themselves honoured by his favour. And yet, when once his conquest was assured, no lover could be more tender and sentimental.

When, for example, Madame Walewska, "the beautiful Pole," refused to yield to his ardour even to save the land she loved dearer than anything save her virtue, his baffled desire found expression in a tempest of rage. With blazing eyes he shouted to the shrinking woman, "You *shall* love me! Yes, I repeat it, you *shall* love me! I have restored the name of your country. It owes its very existence to me! I will do more than this for it. But look at the watch in my hand. Just as I dash it to fragments before you, so will I shatter Poland and all your hopes if you drive me to desperation by rejecting my heart and refusing me yours."

And, hurling his watch against the wall, he shattered it to fragments, and turned round fiercely, to see the un-

**The fourth article in this series, entitled "A Crowned Coquette," will appear in the next number of* THE SMART SET.

happy woman fall unconscious to the floor. When she recovered from her swoon, the long conflict was over, and the victor was on his knees beside her, tenderly wiping away the tears that rolled slowly from her eyes.

And thus it ever was with Napoleon. The least opposition to his will aroused him to a tyrannical rage in which he crushed it ruthlessly under his feet. Then, his conquest complete, he could and did "pass from the fury of an uncontrolled passion to the most suave and delicate phases of sentimental emotion; and, as far as he himself was concerned, he was an ideal lover."

And yet this autocratic man, with all the fierce primitive passion of Peter the Great, could be the gentlest and most chivalrous of wooers when his will was not thwarted. In his wooing of the mysterious Madame * * *, whose identity still remains veiled by asterisks, he was, we are told, as shy and awkward as any boy couching his maiden lance in the lists of love, lacking the courage even to speak to her directly in the early stages of his infatuation. Thus, at a great coronation fête, he exchanged gracious words with every other lady before he made his shy way to Madame's table; and even in her presence it was to her neighbour that he addressed his first remark, an oblique compliment to Madame, whom he saw eating olives. "I see *you* do not eat olives," he said to the lady. "You are quite right; and doubly right not to imitate Madame * * *, for *she is inimitable.*"

And Mademoiselle Georges draws a charming picture of the Autocrat of Europe as a "tender and thoughtful lover, full of juvenile ardour, as much in love as an officer of twenty." "How," she wrote, long years after she had passed out of his life, "how could one not be fascinated and attracted to such a man? He became small and childish to please me. He was no longer the Consul; he was a man in love, but whose love had neither violence nor roughness. He embraced you sweetly; and his words were tender and modest."

There are few revelations more frank and intimate than are furnished by the *Memoires* of Mademoiselle Georges, the beautiful tragédienne who counted two emperors and three kings among her lovers; and who, for two years at least, retained her supremacy in the favour of Napoleon, the most inconstant of men.

"It was," M. Cheramy says, "a veritable affection. It lasted till Napoleon's death."

Even in his last clouded hours at St. Helena he often spoke of her whom he had formerly called his "beautiful Georgina," his "good Georgina." So much for Napoleon's declaration, "I never was in love, except perhaps with Josephine—a little."

II

PROBABLY no woman's life has ever been crowded with more romance than that of this actress of France who came within sight of an imperial crown and ended her days in tragic poverty and loneliness. Her very entry on the world's stage, on which she was destined to play so many brilliant rôles, was dramatic.

On February 23rd, 1787, her father was conducting the orchestra of the Bayeux theatre, when a breathless messenger whispered something into his ear which perturbed him strangely. In his excitement he beat time faster and faster until the singers on the stage could no longer keep pace with him. Then, flinging away his baton, he rushed from the house. Had M. le Conducteur suddenly gone mad? his audience speculated in excited whispers. A deputation followed him to his lodging to ascertain what was the matter. Presently it returned with assuring news, and an interesting announcement was made from behind the footlights. "Ladies and gentlemen, it is nothing serious. The mother and child are doing as well as can be expected."

In this dramatic fashion the future queen of Napoleon's heart made her

début on the stage of the world. The child of a tailor who had turned strolling actor and musician, and of the leading lady of the Bayeux troupe, she was cradled in the very atmosphere of the theatre; the love of acting was in her blood. And thus it is small wonder that, as a child of five, we find her strutting on the stage, a tiny and very winsome dairymaid—Perrette in "La Petite Victoire"—"so small," she says, "that for the milk-can I had to carry on my head, my mother was obliged to find me a cup; and I had, which made the thing completely farcical, a Guillet and Colas as big as Don Quixote."

For nine years the little mademoiselle roamed the provinces in her parents' company, acting in opera, vaudeville, and comedy, winning laurels and capturing hearts wherever she went, until at last accident, or was it Fate, brought her under the notice of Mlle. Rancourt, a star of the Comedie Française, who was so fascinated by her beauty and her gifts that she decided to take her under her wing.

"M. Weimer," was the proposal she made; "I am going to deprive you of your daughter. I propose to take her to Paris with me, and pay the entire cost of her education for the stage. I have a pension of £48 at my disposal for this purpose."

The offer was much too tempting for M. Weimer to resist. And so at the age of 14 mademoiselle bade a tearful adieu to her happy childhood and turned her face towards Paris, with the great actress as companion and protectress.

"Farewell, my Amiens!" she exclaimed, when the hour of parting came. "Farewell, my joyous dances with my madcap companions! But I shall return. It will see me again certainly, in my elegance. I shall arrive at the theatre in a carriage, and you will all of you crowd 'round to see your little Mimi, who will never forget you."

Even sixty years later, when all the joy and pride of life had long fled, the memory of this parting brought tears to her eyes, as she wrote, "What happy times they were! Charming days of childhood, how much I have regretted you!

Then followed three years of hard study in Paris—happy years in spite of their poverty. She lived with her mother in a single, barely-furnished room in the Rue Croix des Petite Champs. "They did their washing at home, the mother made and mended her daughter's dresses, and they often had nothing for dinner except the vegetables which M. Weimer sent them regularly by diligence from Amiens."

But all these struggles and all her years of hard work were forgotten in the brilliant début that was hers when she made her first appearance on a Paris stage as Clytemnestra.

III

SUCH already was the fame of her remarkable beauty and talent that crowds flocked to witness her début.

"Sufficient measures," we are told, "had not been taken to deal with such large and excited crowds. All the guard was engaged at the ticket office, while the entrance door sustained the most terrible siege. Three assaults were made which I could only make a tragical description of. Need one be surprised if people are suffocated for such a superb woman?"

Indeed, never within living memory had Paris looked on such beauty enshrined in a form of such faultless perfection. "The Venus de Milo descended from her pedestal," "Pygmalion's Galatea, full of warmth and life;" "her figure is that of the sister of Apollo when she advances on the banks of Eurotas. Her whole person is made to be offered as a model to Guerin's chisel"—in such terms the chroniclers of the time describe the beauty of a figure which was matched by that of her face. Black eyes, full of fire and brilliance, under eyebrows traced with incomparable purity and strength; a nose, narrow and straight, cut by ob-

lique nostrils passionately dilated; red lips fashioned like Cupid's bow; a profile which is that of a goddess more than that of a woman. And, to complete the catalogue of charms, to which no pen can do justice, she had "sweet little hands, made to carry the sceptre," and arms and shoulders and neck of an "unheard-of richness and magnificence."

Can one wonder that such almost super-human beauty, allied to histrionic gifts little less marvelous, took Paris by storm; or that Mlle. Georges, as she now called herself, was instantly acclaimed as a new and wonderful revelation of loveliness and of a talent amounting to genius?

Sensational as was her first appearance, it was eclipsed by each later impersonation in "Tancrède," "Didon," "Artaxerxes," and "Cinna." All Paris raved over the new actress, and vowed that she was greater than Rachel herself. She was the idol of the city; her fame traveled far beyond the borders of France; she had the world at her feet. As for lovers, they were countless, legion; and foremost among them was Lucien Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon, First Consul of France.

"The good Lucien," she calls him, "who wished to place me in a house of my own, and who loved to hear me recite, frequently playing whole scenes by himself."

He lavished gifts on her—a *beau necessaire,* a silver-gilt teapot with a hundred golden louis in it, and so on; counting himself more than rewarded by a smile of pleasure, never dreaming of asking for more.

And no less disinterested was Prince Sapieha, who placed his enormous riches at her disposal, vowing that if she would shake his hand and smile on him, he would be repaid a hundredfold. He installed her and her mother in a sumptuous apartment in the Rue St. Honoré; furnished it regally, and placed on her boudoir table "a complete trousseau of magnificent cashmeres, jewels, etc."; and refused to enter her apartment without being formally announced like any other caller.

"Such disinterested munificence is rare," Mlle. Georges ingenuously says.

So it is; but Prince Sapieha was "a gentleman." All he asked was to be allowed to pay homage to her beauty and talent; and he paid it, like a gentleman.

But all Mademoiselle's lovers were not as disinterested as Lucien and the Polish Prince. There were others who were not "Guardian Angels," such as the gallant who sent her 20 bank-notes, each of the value of £20, which he begged her to use as curl-papers for her glorious hair. Mademoiselle accepted the curl-papers, and rewarded the donor by allowing him to kiss her hand.

But Mademoiselle's cup of triumph was not yet full. There was one man, a king among men, who still kept aloof from her chariot-wheels—Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul of France. It is true that he seldom missed any of her performances, and that he led the applause which was such music to her ears. But, although his brother was her good friend, Napoleon had never shown a desire for a closer acquaintance.

"He was my hero," she confesses; "I wanted so much to hear his voice, to feel the touch of the beautiful hand I had so often seen on the front of his box. I had begun to despair of meeting him, when one day, to my amazement, his valet called on me to say that the First Consul desired to see me at St. Cloud to receive his congratulations.

"I was seized with a kind of fright. Now that what I had so long and ardently desired had come to pass, I shrank from it in fear and trembling. I spent a sleepless night; and when at last I entered the carriage that was to convey me to St. Cloud I was ready to faint from fright."

But all her fears were dispelled when Napoleon advanced to welcome her

with outstretched hand, and a charming smile of welcome.

"He took me by the hand," she tells us in her Memoirs, "and made me sit on an enormous sofa. He lifted my veil, which he threw on the ground without more ado. 'How your hand trembles!' he said. 'Are you then afraid of me? Do I seem terrible to you? I found you exceedingly beautiful, Madame; and I wished to compliment you. Tell me your name.' 'Marguerite Josephine,' I answered. 'Josephine pleases me; I like that name; but I prefer to call you Georgina. Would you like it'?"

IV

In such kind and homely fashion did the Man of Destiny set the trembling, but proud and happy actress at her ease; and the hours flew on golden wings until at last Napoleon kissed her on the forehead and bade her au revoir. So far from being formidable, this first meeting had been a delight; and those that followed it were still more delightful, for the Autocrat of France proved himself a charming companion, as simple and at times almost as bashful as a boy.

Only once did he treat her with anything but the utmost gentleness and courtesy; and this was when he learned that the veil she wore and which he had kissed, was a present from Prince Sapieha. In an instant he flamed into a fury of rage. He snatched the veil from her face, tore it into shreds, and trampled it under his feet. Then, when his fury had died down, he was overwhelmed with shame and penitence.

To other women Napoleon was often rough, almost brutal in his wooing; but to "Georgina" he was, she tells us, a model of all that is gentle and chivalrous, always patient under her caprices, and ready to kiss her tears away on the rare occasions when he had inadvertently hurt her feelings.

The pictures she draws of the Master of Europe in the rôle of playmate and lover are indeed a revelation of an utterly unexpected phase of his character. She pictures him playing hide-and-seek with her in the salons and corridors of St. Cloud; and sitting with her on the carpet before the library fire, playing the sweetheart as ingenuously as a schoolboy.

"Then," she tells us, "he climbed a small ladder to reach a book from which he wanted me to read to him, whereupon I wheeled the ladder and him to the middle of the room. He laughed and climbed down, and gave me some little smacks on the cheek."

In another charming picture we see Napoleon pirouetting before a mirror, his head adorned with a wreath of white roses which she had been wearing, and exclaiming:

"Look, Georgina! See how pretty I am! I look like a fly in some milk."

On another occasion we see the future Emperor and master of Europe walking arm-in-arm with Georgina through the glades of the St. Cloud wood, as happy and care-free as a rustic lover with his lass. And this was the memory she loves to recall more than any other in her old age of loneliness and poverty.

"How many times," she wrote in those years of sadness and eclipse, "have I recalled that walk, in the midst of my tribulations and disappointments. It is all the same—they cannot take away that. I have been for more than two hours arm-in-arm with the master of the world."

Thus the proud and happy months passed for Georgina.

"I loved the great man," she says, "who was so sweet and gentle and devoted; and he loved me."

It was her supreme triumph; her supreme happiness. But the end of her dream was not far off; and it came with tragic suddenness when Napoleon saw his imperial crown at last within his reach.

"For what reason did Napoleon drop you?" Dumas asked her one day in later years.

"He left me," was her reply, "in order to make himself Emperor."

A dalliance which was permissible to the First Consul was not prudent, scarcely possible, for the Emperor of France; and the day came when Napoleon broke the news to her.

"My dear Georgina," he said, "I have to tell you something that will distress you. For some time I shall be unable to see you— What! You have nothing to say?"

"No," she answered. "I quite expected it. I was not fool enough to suppose that a nobody like myself could long hold any place in your thoughts. I was a distraction to you—and that was all."

When he declared that he would see her again soon, she proudly answered,

"It is very kind of you, but I will not profit by your kindness. I shall go away."

Only once more she saw him, after the imperial crown had been placed on his head; but she refused to melt to his sweet words and flatteries. When he begged her to "behave as the frank, simple girl you used to be," she replied: "I am no longer the little girl I used to be. It will always be an honor to me to be received by your Majesty—but that is all. I am no longer merry. Why should I be? I am disheartened. I want change of air."

"I went home," she says, "very angry and quite overcome. An Emperor, you see, had superseded my First Consul. He was grander, more imposing. I could no longer look for happiness in that quarter. Happiness, if there be such a thing in the world, had to be sought elsewhere."

V

A FEW days later she shook the dust of Paris off her feet and soon found in St. Petersburg a new world to conquer. Her triumph was immediate, immense. The Czar was so delighted by her beauty and acting that he overwhelmed her with compliments and gifts. He sent her a crown, modeled on that worn by Catherine II, and gave her a plaque of diamonds for her waistband. The Grand Duke Constantine, she tells us, called on her every day and "loved her like a sister"; and the Empress Dowager's brother begged her to accept a very valuable diamond ring, together with a purse of red velvet and gold, stuffed with gold coins."

In Sweden, where she went next, her success was as immediate and brilliant. Bernadotte was her slave; he lavished rich gifts of diamonds and pearls on her and installed her as Queen of Beauty at his Court. At the Westphalian Court, too, she was received with open arms as King Jerome's honored friend; and at Dresden we find her playing, by special request, to "a parterre of Sovereigns."

Thus through the years Mademoiselle Georges made her regal progress, everywhere fêted and idolized. Fortune smiled consistently on her; time seemed so powerless to dim her beauty and her powers that at fifty-six Théophile Gautier wrote of her as "electrifying the house" and as being "sublime as usual"; while at sixty-two he declared her "endowed with a beauty which seems to belong to a vanished race."

But however slow of foot, Time never fails to lay his blighting hand on the most fortunate. And so it proved with Mademoiselle Georges. The day came at last when her beauty took to itself wings; when the body that had been the despair of sculptors and the wonder of the world became obese and shapeless; and when the beautiful voice lost all its sweetness and magic.

One would like to draw the curtain over that pathetic appearance—almost the last—of this once queen of women and actress at Saumur—to close one's eyes on the "wrinkles, white hairs, monstrous corpulence, the tottering walk, the broken voice of the poor actress which," to quote a chronicler, "amazed her audience. Their disgust was mingled with pity. They fled from the spectacle; and the curtain was lowered in silence upon an empty hall."

Such was the tragic close of her long and splendid Queendom. There only now remained the bitter dregs of the cup that had been so intoxicating. In 1847 we find her writing to Victor Hugo:

"They have awarded me a pension of £80—but they don't pay it. It is only a mouthful of bread—and I don't get it. They offered to engage me at the Historique, but I declined. What was a fat old woman like me to do among those Chinese shadows? What authors would write for me? What parts could I get?"

Six years later the Française gave her a benefit.

"Unable to stand upright," says one who was present, "she was obliged, in order to recite her long monologue, to lean on the back of a chair. She heard the echo, that night, of the triumphs of long ago. But in vain at such times do we lay flowers at the feet of our artistes. Their hearts are broken; they feel as if they were mourners at their own funerals."

Georgina's heart was, indeed, broken. She had outlived all that made life sweet; she had learnt in bitterness the vanity of it all; and now she could only wait and pray for the end. Twelve more weary long years she had to wait; she sank deeper and deeper into poverty and loneliness. Then, at long last, the merciful end came.

In the days of her pride and splendor she had said jokingly, "Perhaps I shall not have enough money to bury me." She died a pauper, and was only rescued from a pauper's grave by the charity of a few young actors and actresses to whom her beauty and fame were but a tradition. But in her last sleep she wears the regal silk robe which she had worn as Rodogune in the long-gone years when she was the loveliest woman in Europe and Napoleon's uncrowned Queen.

FEAR

By Elizabeth Sharp

I KNOW the seas are calling you while I'm asleep.
Some night I'll start to wake, and stretch my hand,
And grope, and find just moonlight in the place where once you lay.

DON QUIXOTE was the defender of the defenseless, the protector of the innocent, the champion of the good. *Ergo,* all the world laughs at Don Quixote.

THE first time a man loves he is a dashing volunteer. After that he has to be drafted.

A CHOICE PHRASE

By Carl Glick

HE was the most famous writer of his generation. College professors went into ecstasies over his perfect mastery of English. As a stylist he was considered without an equal. A single phrase from his pen would become a household word. No wonder he was sought after by society and his every word remembered and quoted.

At a reception in his honour a large, portly Duchess, toying with her necklace, cornered him in a secluded spot.

"But whisper one of your matchless phrases in my ear," she said, "a phrase that only myself has heard or ever will hear. That will be my claim to immortality."

The world-known writer thought a moment, and then said, "Those big baby eyes of yours sure have got my goat."

The Duchess toyed with her necklace. She was satisfied. . . .

PINE-MUSIC

By Abbie Farwell Brown

A HUNDRED years I seek the stars
Through tempest, heat and cold;
My body seared by many scars,
My spirit wisely old.

Yet the eternal chant I sing,
From sun and shadow made,
Is lisped as sweetly every spring
By the least flowers that fade.

SO long as desire lives in the heart, illusion will live in the mind.

PRIDE OF THE LOWLY

By Milnes Levick

I

EVERY afternoon, when she came up to clean the front hall, Mrs. Narstrom brought Lily a cup of tea. Before she set to with her swab she would stand a moment and contemplate her daughter with a smile almost arrogant. Her head cocked, she would stare at her as if she were a saint come somehow into her daily life—a young saint, evoking a companionable love. On dull days, as Lily sat at the switchboard, her blonde hair looked like ashes, but in the spring and summer the reflection from a window across the court struck down with the brilliance of the sun itself: the shaft plunged into the cup of tea and the liquid shone like wine, holding within itself the mystery of a shimmer caught from the rim of the cup.

To Mrs. Narstrom the indolently twirling steam was incense, the telephone desk a shrine. When the beam touched Lily's hair to silver, in the soft glow from the marble wall thin blue veins were revealed about the girl's temples. When the sun was bold and few walked even in the shade, here, in the coolness of the foyer, there was quietude, a tranquillity aloof from tenants and tradesfolk, setting the city at a distance.

Mrs. Narstrom would recollect herself with an indulgent sigh, nod sagely, and pick up her pail. Sometimes Lily would smile good-humoredly in return, but most often she gave no heed, taking the tea as too much a matter of course to divert her from her novel. Lily was a great reader, Mrs. Narstrom told herself, and with each sweep of the mop her pride increased.

This was the happiest of her hours. The routine of the apartment-building and of domestic affairs in the basement kept the woman at her labors all day, all the evening, but here in the lobby there was surcease in the presence of Lily: the knowledge of her nearness was like a perfume, a subtle radiation, and the harsh and glittering hall became intimate.

Mrs. Narstrom had no need to tell herself, "She is there, my girl, behind me; she is looking at me now." She knew this as one knows the presence of the air. Sometimes she would pause to look at Lily, and Lily would smile, a little wanly and wearily, but to the mother it was the smile of the sun.

Interruptions were infrequent. The cleaning of the hall came at a time of day when breadwinners were passing neither out nor in; it was beyond the hours of marketing or the clatter of the few school children. In summer women with camp stools and baby-buggies lined the shady side of the garish street, but only the warm hum of gossip entered; in winter they stayed close in their flats. Occasionally Lily would manipulate a cord of the switchboard, while her mother secretly noted the girl's deftness: how wonderful that her little girl should be able to give someone upstairs speech with a distant part of the city—perhaps the Battery, perhaps the Bronx, or Flatbush. A smart girl, Lily.

Cleaning the lobby was a task not to be shirked. The long block from Broadway almost to Amsterdam Avenue was lined with tall houses, each of

yellow brick, with rudimentary cornices and iron grilles of various fancies, broad-stepped stoops with two dull globes, and each, most important of all, with a front hall. All the artifices of the contractor were put into these entrances. Above, plaster might fall, fittings decline their duties, the street or the sky peep through unauthorized apertures, but the foyers must retain the utmost of their glory with the immaculateness of false shirt-fronts.

In these buildings there were gradations gauging the importance of the occupants. Some had pretences to grandeur: these were the elevator apartments, tenanted by the aristocracy of the street. Then came the walk-up flats, in similarity of design not discernibly inferior, yet to whose halls no buttons condescended. Below these, at the east end of the block, were two high and dingy buildings, of pre-historic sandstone and brick, astounding pioneers, antedating, it seemed, the subway itself: their entrances were affairs of dusk and dust; mustiness pervaded them and there was neither hallboy nor girl, nor greenery.

Beyond, in Amsterdam Avenue, were still others, lower in the scale, and beyond them in turn one surmised even further descending steps, leading out as they led down, falling with an infinitude of social nuances to the distant slums. But that way the street did not look: it ignored the shopkeeping respectability of the avenue and turned toward the next block west, for which the eye must be cast upward; to the big apartments on Riverside Drive, to the great piles to the south, where modest rents were measured not in three figures but in four, and it was reputed one might give five and still not shine upon the very brow of Prosperity. It was in this direction that Mrs. Narstrom, too, turned her gaze, descrying a promised land, not for herself but for her daughter.

II

In the beginning she had fancied the front hall to be very grand and she was proud when Lily had come to take her place regularly at the telephone desk. It was a hall of the type manufactured wholesale with a glibness of device as facile as that ineptness which produces the names of apartment houses. Tall mirrors were set about its narrowness with an elephantine craft of spaciousness. Slabs of marble—cheap marble like a bathroom's — alternated in the wainscot with panels of green plush, patterned in intricate relief, here and there faded to brownish, curling at loose edges. Along the sides were imitation palms of an irritating green, eternally presenting arms; captaining them, a rubber plant. A strip of matting marched precisely down the center, as if determined that none, dazzled, should go astray. On either side of the matting were innumerable small tiles, octagonal, white and black, arranged in elementary design.

Sometimes as she scrubbed Mrs. Narstrom wondered how many there were, but she had never succeeded in counting them, because the thought of Lily would come intruding persuasively and she would welcome it like a caress.

No lobby in the block was more spick and span than Mrs. Narstrom's. Scrubbing was a part of her scheme of life, her own life and Lily's. One was diligent, one would be rewarded: that way led to a future, and the girl. . . . She was not always to sit there at the back of the hall, against the stairs. This Mrs. Narstrom knew with a deep and vivid sense of tangibility; yet when she sought to look into the magic crystal there was only Lily's effulgent figure in a dissolving golden mist. The girl's destiny eluded her with the evasive positiveness of a dream.

At times pathos came to the woman at the sight of her daughter's pallor, and she wondered if there were no way for Lily to receive the gifts of the sun and the wind: she remembered the star-flowered northland hills of her youth and the tang of the air and the sturdy lads. Lily was delicate—yet of so refined a delicacy, like a lady; her smile, the tracery of her veins, the slimness of

her hands, her fingers with their nurtured moons. To Mrs. Narstrom there was no insipidity in the girl.

Every morning Lily slept till well past eight, a full two hours after her mother had begun to bustle cautiously in the basement rooms' warm fetor of bedclothes. Narstrom was the second of the household to awake, and he hurried through his dressing and his breakfast that there might be time for janitor's chores before he went to work. He was a janitor morning and evening and by day stoked in the engine-room of a brewery while his wife looked after the apartment-house. That also was one way to get on in the world. Before the determination of his wife Narstrom had no will. Only for Lily was there leisure.

The girl rose lackadaisically each morning, luxuriating in bed as she listened to her mother's hushed activity. When she had at length wearied of inertness she would call out, "Ma, oh, ma!" Her voice sounded thin between the concrete of the walls beyond which lay the dark littered space of the basement.

Her mother would hasten to her with busy greetings. Often she would take the half-dressed girl a cup of coffee, not infrequently enriched with cream filched drop by drop from tenants' bottles. Lily, stretching, murmuring thanks, sat upon the bed, sipping in disarray, while she thought of the switchboard with its lines still connected as for the night, of some event of the previous day, of those potentialities, vague but joyous and magnificent, of which the future was compact, like a novel. In her appointed future there was no basement; the light did not come weakly or by chance reflection: the windows of her house of dreams were rose-colored and coruscating. All this existence in the basement was something transient: it seemed so in her own mind, and her mother's attitude toward life permitted no other conception.

III

THE business of the house constantly intruded into the existence of the Nastroms, calling them forth, encroaching upon their home as the tide upon the hut of a dweller by the shore. The entrance to their three huddled rooms had the accessibility of the street: the door, through which delivery-boys stared many times a day, opened upon the cemented space about the dumb-waiters. Four dumb-waiters, a pair on either side; push-buttons, pipes and cords and wires, fuel, tinkers' litter—all the clumsy mechanism of a constricted order disclosed with the gaunt crudity of a stage rehearsal. Clatter and shrillness resounded and echoed in the home of Mrs. Narstrom and not the utmost exactitude of routine gave her a sense of security from some ever-imminent emergency.

She labored here even more diligently than upon the front hall, pursuing Narstrom with incessant vigor, and with a sighing persistence bringing order from Lily's untidiness. She despised her home and she was immensely vain of it; she gabbled of the day when it would be put behind them and no less steadily and persistently contemplated its virtues with an amazement that filled her mind to secret silence. It was at once pinnacle and base; the unhoped-for gardens of serenity to which the good God had led them for the sake of Lily's early years, and the barrenness from which was to spring the green tree of the future.

To this duality of her home she had more than once sacrificed her savings and Narstrom's, acquiring pictures, rugs, an entire set of furniture from a departing tenant, that the present might be celebrated and the future prepared for.

She did not think definitely of the future, except in wonderment, yet the mystery of it was ever with her, and the certainty; she faced it smiling and with eager, closed eyes, waiting childlike for the vouchsafed surprise. Occasionally she contemplated possession of a shop, a delicatessen in Amsterdam Avenue or a notion-store in Broadway. This was but the craving and not the solace of

her soul, and there was always, lurking and elusive, a magical beyond. For her there could be no happiness in tranquillity. The urge of her desires vibrated fiercely: of the desires of the past which were become an insignificant achievement, of those of the future which offered everything because they offered nothing. Nevertheless, she was happy, if not in placidity, then in anxiety.

Of this driving force, beating upon her with an insistency of the sea, her husband had no conception. The pride of her ambitions was to him but the cause of an unflagging irksomeness. Weariness had descended upon him and no sojourning was permitted; he was a little bark before the headwinds.

"My wife, she has a way," he would sometimes say, unable to formulate an analysis of an outlook upon existence which was to him absurd, perverse, made diffuse and contemptible by a childish intolerance.

What was, was good enough, he would mutter, but before the woman herself and the onslaught of her conviction he dared raise no voice. Nevertheless, he did not surrender but clung tenaciously to an inert and surreptitious scepticism; to himself he took exceptions in a court of superior and comprehending wisdom. He could not face her in her moments of possession, and so in the process of years had come to look obliquely, casting slow and evasive glances, unrebelling but unyielding, at the walls, the floor, the furniture.

It had become a habit; he stammered or held a passive and uneasy silence before the tenants, the tradesmen, his fellows in the engine-room of the brewery. He shifted, using in cautious exasperation a helpless gesture like a weary guard against a blow; he interpolated single words which were swept aside like fluttering paper before her broom. She stood erect before him, her red hands on her hips, her clothes limp as if with the dankness of steam and sweat, a wisp waggling at one side of the nubbin into which her scanty, tarnished hair was drawn. Green specks flickered in her eyes and defiant determination issued without pause from her mouth: a mouth wide and pliant, strength latent in the mobility of the thin lips. A mouth to shout down the chastising winds of a clamorous ocean in the defense of Lily.

"Yes, you stand there and tell people how to get along, and what are you? A fireman! A janitor! You should thank the good God you have such a family, a family to be proud of. Look at Lily! And there you stick, making a hullabaloo over a table. One little table. A table for your own daughter to sit at without feeling ashamed. Maybe it's too good for your family, heh? Well, there's nothing on earth too good for your family. Not a thing on earth. It ain't your fault we've got a home like this, with that chair and that lamp and that picture. It ain't your fault we're not living yet in that room on Eighty-third Street. Who's made this home out of nothing at all, every single stick? And Lily is going to have that. I won't let her be ashamed, even of her father. And you can't take it away from her. Understand? You can't. I won't let you. It's Lily's. You could come here with the Devil himself and you wouldn't get it. Take it away if you dare; do you hear? Take it! Take it if you dare!"

She would stop, sometimes abruptly, sometimes with spent breath, and he, staring wearily askance, would remain as he had been, like a chilled swimmer clinging to a rope as the breaker surges past. In the silence of her reaction, even as she thrust forth an accusatory finger, there often came to her an unowned suspicion of ineffectualness.

IV

At these quarrels, in which her father took silence for armor and found it a weapon, Lily looked on in the apathy of the accustomed. Each time her belief strengthened: her father was unworthy of her. Yet she loved him; sometimes she pressed his hand and an abstruse feeling of comprehen-

sion moved her dumbly to an air of age and wisdom. Secretly she recognized as valid his infrequent buffets for her impudence. Between them was a tacit, almost furtive, communion, in which the girl, even while relishing the vehemence of her mother and joying in being its inspiration, united in spirit with her father. For Lily had no will to set her hand against the Devil's.

Narstrom regarded her with a passive fondness, having no illusion of the future. She was his daughter, a little girl; well, what was extraordinary? There were other little girls.

He did not think of it, but still he liked to have her by him. It was grateful to feel her hand, to surmise her understanding when his wife was scolding, but against the potentialities of misfortune he took no refuge in romantic glamour: for that he had not the imagination. She was to follow the paths of her kind, marry, bear, face in turn the difficulties of basement and furnaces.

Lily's presence abided with him at his tasks in the apartment-house and in the brewery, not enlarging life to the measure of a conflict in which an angel of the Lord led the chosen toward victory, not dignifying his drudgery with the inevitableness of Fate, but sweetly, like a bright blue hedge flower bobbing in the wind beside the husbandman.

So she seemed to him. But this weed of the city blossomed on no stem to flourish above the spatter of the rain and withstand gusts in its sturdiness; she looked pallidly but without timidity upon the tangle about her, and put forth tendrils that spiralled tight around what offered attachment.

It was so she thought to rise. It was so she interpreted life, as life appeared to her: a strange mingling of scraps, bits of street lore, melodramatic absurdities about which moving pictures were built, and most of all the romanticism of her novels, the novels of which her mother was so proud, supplied inexhaustibly in the street above by the branch library, seemingly the mouth of some vast machine at whose thither end moral and sentimental formulas were poured in, to emerge finished and bright, ideals issuing like gay labeled jars of preserves.

She read rapidly; of that, too, her mother was proud. A girl of fifteen, to have read so much. Mrs. Narstrom beamed as she watched Lily eat her way through shelves of books. And in the incapability of her secretive ignorance the child digested nothing: she gorged silently, irascible at the interruptions of the switchboard, reading to dizziness, till her pale eyes were reddened and her meager vitality was drained vicariously so that the touch of the actual brought no reflex.

She looked on at the affairs of her parents in silence and without demonstration, while within her head were spun and broken and spun again the webs of a life of her own that was to transcend her mother's expectations, an electrifying glory. A lambent bough was to burgeon. Phrases floated detached in her mind, stock phrases of the romanticists, the sententious mawkishness of the legends on the screen. Visualized as print, they became talismanic and in the manner of youth's imaginings conjured up a world of magnificence at once vague and concrete. Mrs. Narstrom had nothing left to offer, so complete the assumption her daughter had absorbed. She was baffled: she had come to the edge of the palpable and peer as she might glimpsed only the miraculous possibility of a stepping-stone, a shop, in Amsterdam Avenue, perhaps in Broadway. The younger eyes, in their impatience, searched for the tangible, and beyond the barriers of inexperience beheld spectacle in enactment. Lily pondered not upon the thing itself, but on the manner of its coming.

V

THE seasons penetrated even here, to Lily in the marble corridor, set in square miles of brick. In the stir of spring the house, the street itself, gave forth a different sound. And the girl

would go to the doorway, standing there with the surprised passivity of one who hears a whisper, the murmur of the world when it becomes but the manifold echo of one voice . . . of his. At her desk she idled over her book, seeing nothing, or lost herself in the hypnotic fascination of the little disk of the transmitter, swaying interminably on its double cord at an idle touch. Sometimes there came the memory of vivid curled leaves on Broadway's little trees. Limits dissolved; the present was immersed in the fluidity of the future; the world became restive in its languor, inviting and curious, daring.

Lily came sometimes to ask her mother to take her place at the telephone, or, if she were busy in some distant part of the house, would make a few arbitrary connections and abandon the switchboard to the maledictions of the importunate. These recesses gradually increased in frequency; in her solicitude over the girl's fatigues Mrs. Narstrom failed to notice in them a certain periodicity.

A new manner came into Lily's bearing. Where she had been quiescent in her acceptance of homage she now became aloof; her remonstrances at the annoyances of her mother's energy were tinged more deeply with condescension. The obscure workings of her mind moved her to laughter. She smiled, at times she giggled, with her head averted. Mrs. Narstrom took it for appreciation of her banter and was gratified.

"Have you taken a laughing powder, Lily?" she would ask with clumsy gravity, and then would join in the girl's mirth, repeating her jest over and over.

Lily did not tell why she laughed, could not, perhaps, unless it were at the spectacle of these grown-ups treating her still as a child, unaware of the joke whose butt they were: that she was of the same stuff as themselves, was no longer a child, but had attained a secret of her own, and through it prepotence.

Now and then, in the hall or the basement, she took some trinket, a memento, from its hiding place, and contemplated it timorously, yet not without a self-conscious hope that she be found out. Against such discovery she constructed elaborate assertions of her right to independence; irrefutable words, uttered with a ferocious emphasis whose every intonation was prescribed by silent rehearsal. She would confound and defy them. At the prospect a nervous flutter shook her, a tremor of resentment at the reproaches of which her parents had as yet no thought.

Sullenness darkened the shallow blue of her eyes, scorn puckered her lips; her whole body shook with the force of her heart and the sound of it deafened her. It was a cataclysmic throbbing in which her mother and her father were shriveled, obliterated, by the valor of her determination. Then there came subsidence and the air cleared as if with the slow lifting of battle smoke and once more her unexacting duties drew her head to the tangible.

In these contests she was not alone: always she saw him nearby and heard his voice urging to defiance, speaking in the same taut whisper for which she listened by her mother's door; it cajoled her to rebellion in this realm of imagination as it had persuaded her in the world of the flesh. She did not picture him clasping her hand and facing them as her aid and her equal; the central position she reserved for herself: in the mental picture he was an onlooker, instigating from a distance, his delivery-basket cocked impudently upon his arm, audacious assurance in his eye.

As the spring unfolded, more and more she longed for the day of her assertion. It came about by chance, and by the dominance of the girl's idea of her prerogative. Mrs. Narstrom stumbled upon them, lurking, and the whining exaggeration of innocence in the girl's tone brought her up sharp. For the first time in her life she grasped her daughter with a heavy hand, and Lily turned like a spitfire, all the venom of the spoiled child spurting at the touch.

"Lily, what are you doing?"

"Don't touch me!"

The courtdoor slammed.

"But—why, Lily! what you mean—"

"Take your hand off me, I tell you!"

"Don't you talk to me that way!"

"I won't have it; I'm not a baby any more."

"What a child!"

"No, no! I'm a woman now—"

"Woman?" Mrs. Narstrom advanced, and in the force of a grip strengthened by years of drudgery Lily turned. She sought now to find the words she had said over so often to herself and could only repeat, "Let go," like a naughty little girl. She cried for the fervor of her mood of liberation and nothing came to her except the dizziness and anger. Anger at herself no less than at her mother; at the anger itself robbing her of speech; her whole body became a pulse; her head, her lips were drawn back in a crispation of the nerves. She sobbed without tears.

Her mother's voice came from a great distance as she pressed on with her absurd queries, not accepting what she knew. The words came sharp in staccato syllables.

"What you mean? What you mean? Say it, I tell you!"

They faced one another, the woman and the girl, and a distorting glass was between them. They beheld not visages, but eyes: Lily's eyes uplifted obliquely, frightened, a film that could not light their inward dullness glittering upon them; Mrs. Narstrom's drawn small, cold, a tiny glare of fire at their centers. All the hatred of parents and children flared up, the pent hatred of a little lifetime of repression and jealousy of achievement, the elder dread of rebellion, of disappointment.

Each was held by the fear of being made the victim of a spiritual sacrifice. The knowledge that one of them must triumph was no longer latent: the daughter struggled against an existence imposed upon her; the mother, for her ideal, for her future as it was to be carried on by this child, a life to which her own was but the chrysalis.

Suddenly Mrs. Narstrom raised her veined hand and it fell upon Lily. Again and again she struck, not like a mother but like a defrauded woman; she clutched the girl, shook her, threw her aside and caught her back again, visiting upon this flesh of her flesh the requital of the changeling. She ceased at last, and leaned against the wall, gasping. Lily snivelled.

Then surprisingly Mrs. Narstrom was gone. The girl lay still. The knowledge that her mother knew she was lying there on the cement floor was a solace. She calculated the path of light from the court doorway, and even moved a bit that it might strike full upon her. But no tradesman entered. The poignance of her exultant self-commiseration waned.

Upstairs the telephone gave forth a buzzing, here heard faintly, like a persistent fly's it came in a drearily repeated signal, a buzz and then a fourth part of silence, repeated indefinitely, as in a contest of pertinacity. It was hypnotic; Lily listened, losing herself, forgetting her sobs. Her personality drifted; she was detached and overcome with new pity for this creature lying on the floor. A swoon: that was the right word. And the telephone. How strange, how funny! They could wait. What matter? It was like going to sleep. She was going to sleep, she, that Lily below there, on the basement stones.

Then the buzzing turned into a goad; it roused her, awakening longings, carrying her mind out over the wires. She contemplated the kindly and hospitable world and the warm assuagement it offered. Her thoughts traversed a vast and sunny land. Once again the tiny, thick drone of the sounder changed in character, becoming now prosaic and workaday, stirring no more than curiosity: the universe took on its old aspect, once more held tenants, once more had its routine, its possibilities of eavesdropping if one wished.

The girl rose petulantly and sought her reflection with a swing of the head. She straightened her hair — not quite complete; someone might ask what had disarranged it; then she could say . . .

She strode to the telephone desk, eyes in the air, resolutely heedless of all about her, and as she sat in the dim afternoon light of her little corner a glimpse of the street visible far off as through the mouth of a cave, she became aware that her mother was at the farther end of the hall.

Presently the girl flicked a glance.

Her mother did not see. Her back was turned. Lily discovered a mirror and watched unashamed, her gaze on tiptoe, sullenness ready to hand.

Mrs. Narstrom was on her knees; she rocked back and forth, a brown brush in her hand. Her body swung to the labor, but without the vigor of her wonted workmanship. And Lily saw that she did not advance, did not shift her pail, but swung to and fro over one spot, scrubbing, scrubbing interminably and meaninglessly, like a conventual novice before whose ever-moving brush dirt is cast that patience may be established under the whims of a mysterious God.

THE FREQUENTER OF CLUBS

By M. A. Gerstle

HE stopped, coming out of the Union Club, and paused to flick a bit of dust from his coat with a languid finger. With a half-hid scornful smile he watched Percy Carringle, the munition millionaire's son, timidly pass through the portals of the club. It amused him to see the uncertainty with which this *nouveau riche* looked around him. *His* father, for more years than he could remember, had frequented the club, and he bade fair to follow in his father's footsteps.

He stood hesitating;—should he go to the Vanderbilt's or to the Ritz first? Suddenly he remembered. He had to go to the Vanderbilt's; he didn't have enough milk in his wagon for the Ritz.

YOU

By David Morton

COME Michaelmas or Easter,
Come Mayday on the green,
You are the one I walk beside—
You are my chosen Queen.

And splendid are the fête days,
Right royal, they, and fine;
But every day and every day
Yours is the hand in mine.

THE ETERNAL FUGITIVE

By Ben Hecht

I

IT was raining. A crowd of stenographers, clerks and office girls clustered in the lighted entrance of the skyscraper. They were going home after the day's work. There was a pleasing smell of rubber, face lotions and wet hair about the little throng. The young women appeared provokingly naïve and frolicsome. They stood looking out at the flooded street with dreaming eyes and mysteriously piquant gestures. They shivered languidly in the half embraces of umbrella-armed escorts. In front of them the rain came down, flinging its faint melodious shout through the darkened street, throwing an alluring blur over lighted windows and hurrying traffic.

Ladner, his umbrella still unopened, hesitated in the entrance. He stood watching the rain smoke moving in dark shape through the gleam of the downpour. The crowded street-cars passed in front like illuminated carnival floats. The lights of the office buildings swarmed mistily through the veil of water. The pavement under his nose bristled frantically. He had during the day closed a hospital order for two hundred thermometers, eaten pleasantly at noon of Thüringer sausage and red kraut and received word on the telephone that his wife's sister had deferred her visit from Omaha for another month. So far as he was concerned, the world, pleased and placid, was going home to its wife.

His work finished for the day, Ladner always went home to his wife. The laws of gravity were no more mysterious and monotonous than the routine he followed in this matter. Without any conscious love for his wife, or any particular desire to return to the five uninteresting and familiar rooms he called home, Ladner would nevertheless have as soon thought of cutting off his ears as of failing to return to this same wife and these same five rooms when his day's work was finished. He was what is known among wise and comfort-loving women folks as an ideal husband, in that his virtues were matters of habit rather than of intelligence, his fidelity a routine rather than a Quixotic emotion.

Ideal though he was, there came moments in Ladner's life when furtive longings, elusive agitations stirred the vacuum of his spirit. On Spring afternoons, walking along the boulevard, eyeing the colors and curves of fabrics against the breeze, he was prone to such moments. Occasionally they overtook him as he sat parching his bald head before the gas log in his home on a winter night. Now such a moment came to him as he stood, the rain leaping with a rising halloo across the skyscraper entrance, watching its tumultuous descent, listening to the exhilarating cacophony of the homebound traffic and in his nose the incongruous meadow-smell of fresh water.

Things seemed to be music in the world, music of some gypsy piper dancing on his way at the head of the rain. Ladner, the short man with a little paunch, a bald head and a derby hat, smoking a fat cigar and wedged in the crowd of the skyscraper entrance, became full of vague dreams. The water scent, the odors of wet hair and disturbed perfumes, the youthful, beckoning faces about him gave him a

sense of isolation from the world—the thermometerish world in which he wrote checks and dictated letters, in which husbands went home to their wives and talked of the postponed visits of sisters, or aunts or grandmothers. It occurred to him that the little throng in which he stood were refugees, outcasts, separated from kith and kin, stranded in delightful and vaguely immoral companionship upon a lonely foreign coast.

The city before his eyes became strange. There was something strange, unknown about the blurred and light-pitted walls of the great buildings across the street. Mystery and adventure stalked the grey and slanting corridors of the rain. Impossible things beckoned to the little man in the complacent derby—the rolling deck of a pirate ship, a plunging troop of horsemen riding a storm-swept canyon. . . .

A young woman's voice, pitched as if about to laugh, exclaimed behind him:

"Hello, Mr. Ladner. Rather wet, isn't it?"

II

With a start the thermometer man found his eyes resting upon the end of his cigar that glowed cozily beyond his nose. He came back to the babble about him, to the rain leaning in the dark outside, and to a tilted face under an umbrella, lips parted, eager-eyed. The girl from the waist shop on his floor. Her voice had more than startled him. It had frightened him. The music, the pirate ship, the plunging horsemen had suddenly crystallized. They were in the voice of the young woman who had spoken to him. He looked intently at her. Trim, undulant, high-heeled, her skirt a meaningful outline, she seemed surrounded by exclamation points. There was something terrific about her, a thing imminent, violently immoral.

"Yes, it does seem rather wet," Ladner answered.

He removed the fat cigar from his mouth and surveyed its rubicund nose. It was time he was starting for home. He had been standing in the doorway almost five minutes. It was unlikely that the rain would let up. An idea seated itself in Ladner's thought. Folding its arms and with eyebrows sternly arched it chanted:

"Go home! Go home! Go home!"

And yet Ladner stood his ground, his five familiar rooms tugging at his coat sleeve, his wife pulling at his ear, the unintelligent virtues which distinguished him as an Ideal almost lifting him bodily into the street. He stood his ground, staring frightenedly at the smiling young woman. Yesterday he would have nodded curtly and passed on, an Ideal inviolable. Tomorrow he would have smiled politely and hurried off, a vacuum unassailable. But she had come to him in a dare-devil mood, a mood which inclined toward pirate ships rather than thermometers, toward plunging horsemen rather than the five uninteresting and familiar rooms.

They would walk leaning close to each other, the rain tripping furiously upon their raised umbrella and walling them off from the world. Linking arms, they would snuggle cozily under the intimate bulge of this umbrella. . . . A delicious warmth spread a comet-like tail through Ladner's heart in pursuit of the idea. His thoughts danced around in his head, eluding him and leaving him bewildered. No sybaritic plottings occupied him. The bald contemplation of wickedness would have plunged Ladner into a cold sweat and sent him leaping for a street car and home. Nothing further than the idea of walking beside the young woman, under an umbrella. . . .

"It doesn't look as if it's letting up, does it?" he said, a quaver in his voice.

A giddy sense that he was stalking same wary prey overpowered him, that he would have to move cautiously, with sinister finesse. He gasped.

"No," she answered. "I'm afraid somebody's goin' to get sort of wet."

She was smiling at him. He might suggest it now. Calmly. Perhaps she

was going his way? With a polite but indifferent question mark after the sentence. He was about to speak when a sudden doubt intruded. This wondrously beautiful creature with the high heels, the remarkable clothes—perhaps she thought him an old fat grouch. His wife frequently identified him in this manner. It was taking too great a chance. She might scream.

Ladner fingered his closed umbrella nervously.

"Are you . . . going my way . . . perhaps?" he asked.

To his surprise they had started pushing through the little crowd together. To his bewilderment they had stepped together into the flooded pavement. Lighted street-cars clanged slowly by, automobiles mysteriously veiled, wagons clattering, yellow misted restaurant and store signs, the cinema flash of women's legs and men's arms through the rain. The scene launched itself dizzily upon his senses. He was holding an umbrella over a young woman's head. She was laughing. He could hear the castenets of the rain on the umbrella top. People were darting by.

"I usually take the elevated at Clark and Lake."

Four blocks away. Then he would bow and leave her. In the meantime he was getting remarkably wet. The rain crept down his neck. The rain swarmed into his shoes.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "Quite a shower."

He turned his head to look at the young woman. Her face was lifted. Red lips, shining eyes. Ladner's heart bounded. Hair coming down. Water trickling over her bare neck. Did she know their fingers were touching on the umbrella handle? Their arms tangled themselves close to each other? It was necessary to talk. But the young woman kept laughing. She seemed to stumble frequently and fall against him. Whenever she stumbled she laughed. Also she seemed inspired with a desire to slide. Ladner, planting his shoe squarely on the pavement, discovered that by pushing forward he could slide with her. For a block they made little runs and launched themselves into little slides. It was no longer necessary to talk. The thing to do was to take short leaps and slide.

He was moving now with a growing excitement in his thought. The incessant rhythm of the rain popping about his ears, under his feet, brought a restlessness to him. The city with its long quivering reflections floating strangely in the air, floating mysteriously beneath the pavements, was no longer the city of thermometers and five uninteresting and familiar rooms. He had stepped into a different world. He was leaping about and sliding over mysterious ground. A young woman with wet hair and fingers resting deliciously on his, was laughing at his side. They were bound for distant and fantastic places.

The silver-breasted, eager flood of rain beat across the night with moonlit wings. The shout of it brushed enticingly against his ears. Under the feet of the hurrying people the rain sheets exploded into parasols of spray, lighting the long street with little swinging bells. Merry thoughts crowded Ladner's bald head. Sensations came upon him—a breathlessness, an ardor for the feel of life. His eyes turned eagerly toward the blurred windows of cafés, hotel ways, street shops. His heart bounded at the sight of darkened taxicabs skidding gayly through the darkness and the downpour.

Two more blocks. Ladner pressed his fingers upon the young woman's hand. They had stopped their sliding for the moment. It was therefore necessary to say something. The young woman had also ceased her laughing. She was looking at him. Ladner laughed.

"Great stuff," he cried. "It's going to thunder."

"Isn't it lovely?" the young woman answered.

A distant rumble pointed her words. They progressed in silence down the rain-booming street. Two merry dere-

licts. The leaping and sliding had taken Ladner's breath. He was content to walk. His eyes roamed the flood. His spirit swashbuckled past lighted windows. He had stopped wondering at himself. A great electric sign protruding above the street in front of him announced the presence of "The Royal Café."

Instinctively Ladner slowed his step. A spanking signal fire in the midst of a wild and lonely moor was this sign. His eyes ceased their roaming. His spirit, adventuring naïvely among the various scenes about him, returned to quarters—a lusty, foraging troop summoned to battle. He stood, a little fat, drenched figure in a derby hat, gawking from under an umbrella, a smiling, dishevelled young woman clinging to his arm. The rain hung about him—a lonely tumult. The sign blazed mistily above him—a ballyhoo for the joy of life, a great beacon of the world that lay outside thermometers and carpet slippers.

They had stopped walking. It was more than necessary to say something. It was imperative. Why were they standing still in the rain? Ladner's better nature conferred feebly with him. His guardian angel flapped a warning wing in his ear. Visions of his wife, his wife's sister, his thermometers and the empty slippers under his easy chair drifted persuasive and dignified in his thought.

Lightning jumped above the darkened sky-scraper roofs. A crack of thunder followed. The rain blew distressfully against his face. It banged about his shoes. It slipped down his neck, crawled into his socks. It flung itself wildly against his legs, guiding him, pushing him toward the yellow gleaming door of the Royal Café.

"Let's go in till it stops," he exclaimed hoarsely.

The cool wet fingers of the young woman entwined themselves in his.

Mirrors, garment-hung pillars, men and women and the high smell of drink; voices booming, cheery faces laughing, the slant of opened mouths, the precise and dexterous black coats of waiters darting in and out; round white-linened tables with eager heads above them; pink and green little fringed lamps—Ladner grinned nervously at the scene. There was about it a prismatic effulgence, a boom and glow of sinister lights and mirths. Its shine and hilarity contrasted mysteriously with the rain-laden night outside.

He had felt in command outside. Now he grew embarrassed. Fear whitened his throat. The young woman beside him was laughing again. A hideous desire to turn and bolt cried for action. He shut his umbrella. He felt appalled. The young woman was advancing into the maelstrom of rouged faces, hoisted glasses of liquor, detonations of laughter. He inserted himself timidly into an aisle.

Surrounded by an oblivious throng of theatrical faces, tables, pink and green lights, Ladner sat staring across a little stretch of linen at the young woman. Under the table her wet-stockinged ankles had carelessly embraced his foot. A waiter was bending over, holding a card in his hand and smiling expectantly.

"Just something to drink," said the young woman. "I'll have a sweet Manhattan."

Ladner nodded.

"Two sweet Manhattans," chirped the waiter, and was off with a flourish.

"Who'd ever of thought it," exclaimed the young woman, pressing her ankles enthusiastically together.

If he were going to be hanged, if he were going to be hanged, he might as well be a sheep . . . a black sheep . . . a horrible, unsavory outcast of a sheep. What would he do tomorrow when he met her . . . ?

If his wife ever learned, if his wife ever learned! . . . The soul of the little thermometer man turned like a body in a grave, stood up and emitted a ghastly buzz, and began to kick at his ribs. Or perhaps it was his heart that did this. His eyes encountered a wide-mouthed, conical glass. He lifted it and drank. The young woman was

drinking opposite him. Perhaps after the drink it would be all right to get up and start for home. He had made no definite promises of buying any more drinks.

"Isn't it cozy and nice in here?"

The young woman had placed her glass on the table again. Her white hand, her white wrist were stretched across the linen toward him. If he were going to be hanged, if he were going to be hanged! . . . Ladner placed his hand in the opened fingers and squeezed. He was conscious of warm ankles, pink warmths in his throat, white fingers, and a great turning of green and pink lights.

"I can't stay very long," he gulped. "But it *is* nice. . . ."

"I'll bet you don't even know my name, Mr. Ladner."

What should he say? Good Lord, his wife was waiting for him! Edna! her name was Edna. And she was laughing. Who said there no rush? With his wife waiting. His wife's sister waiting. No, she wasn't coming for a month. At least she wasn't waiting.

The waiter was bending over their table. Edna was speaking to him. The waiter was gone. Two more pink drinks would return.

III

LADNER rose dizzily to his feet. His face felt strangely elastic. Under him his legs insisted upon bending and executing unnecessary movements. In a blur of pink and green, of tinkles and voices, he was aware of Edna. She had also stood up. It was time to leave.

Ladner felt a breathless lift in his spirit. They were great friends, this Edna and he. They loved each other. His foot felt lonely, removed from the warmth of her embracing ankles. Never mind. The waiter was bowing profusely. A wonderful man, the waiter, full of subtle comprehensions. Ladner paused and extracted another quarter from his pocket. He thrust it into the waiter's hand. Another bow.

Envious eyes were turned upon him. It was somewhat difficult to pass between the several thousand tables. Ladner walked slowly, portentously. Edna was following. Beautiful creature who loved him and him only. He had a right to be loved. And she had promised to be faithful. Ladner smiled upon the upturned faces. The upturned faces smiled in return. Some of them laughed.

A stocky little man, waving an opened umbrella over his head, emerged with a capricious step from the door of the Royal Café. The strong rain, leaning in the night, plumbed a swift hypotenuse between the hidden roof tops and the street. It made a great noise in the dark.

"Edna," whispered the stocky little man.

The young woman came to his side and cuddled against him. Her hair brushed his cheek. The umbrella over their heads began to sing. The street was almost deserted. The lights of the shop windows and restaurants had become little blurs of yellow. For a block Ladner walked, aware of a delicious sway in the night. A warm, cozy taxicab--and they would ride away. It had been all arranged inside.

The delicious sway was vanishing from the night. The two figures that had been walking close and intent in the rain, came to a halt on a corner. A policeman, raincoated and standing in the doorway of the drug store, looked at them casually. He perceived two faces come together under an umbrella.

"Kissing in the rain," grunted the policeman. "Crazy fools."

Then the policeman stared with a startled eye. One of the figures was running—running down the street. Its derby hat flopped to the pavement and went tumbling into the gutter. The figure did not stop. Bareheaded, its umbrella jumping behind it, the figure skidded, bounded and stumbled ahead.

The policeman darted from the doorway. He expected screams. Instead

he found himself approaching a laugh. A young woman, standing with an unopened umbrella was laughing in the rain. Her hat had almost slid off her head. Her face was turned toward the fleeing figure.

The policeman hesitated. It was a bad night and no particular harm seemed to have been done. He waited until the young woman opened her umbrella and started off. Thereupon he returned to the doorway of the drug store.

IV.

"What made you so late? And where's your hat? Heavens!"

Ladner, shaking the water from him, entered the five familiar rooms, blinked his eyes at the familiar face and smiled.

"There was a street car wreck," he said. "Nothing much. But I got delayed."

His wife nodded.

"I'll have dinner in a few minutes. You'd better get dry."

With a highly matter of fact air, the good woman turned and hurried toward her kitchen. Ladner removed his watch from his vest pocket and glanced at it. His head ached a bit. Thank the Lord, he was only forty-five minutes late. He had thought . . .

He entered the front room and lighted the gas log. Its warmth felt good. Removing his shoes he thrust his feet against it. For several minutes he sat contemplating the artificial flames. Then he murmured to himself:

"Narrow escape. I almost . . . Lord, I almost . . ."

A shudder passed over him. He began to tremble. His eyes searched the room. They lighted with reassurance upon the phonograph that hadn't been played for a year. Upon the mahogany table with a carpet runner across its center and a stained glass lamp burning above it. He repeated, shivering,

"Lord, that was a narrow escape!"

"Dinner," called his wife from the back of the house.

The rain pattered violently against the front room windows. But Ladner paid no heed. He felt sleepy. His feet were almost dry. He shoved them into a pair of slippers. With a yawn he arose and walked toward the dining room.

"That's too bad about your sister having to put it off," he remarked as he seated himself, and a feeling of peace, of virtue, of well being re-entered his heart.

Pirate ships and plunging horsemen, a laughing face tilted under an umbrella and the rain beating with moonlit wings across the night—these dissolved into mists that had never been as the smell of the hot soup came familiarly into his nose.

THE CAPRICE OF CUPID

By June Gibson

I LOVE Jerry and Jack and Billy and Bob and Phil and George. And Paul loves me.

GEORGETTE

By Anne Clegg

I

THE news of Kirke Lane's engagement had come as a shock to Phil Coniston. Far from contemplating marriage on his own account he had concluded that his friend shared his own views on the subject, and the blow found him unprepared. In vain Kirke assured him that it would make no difference between them: he had only to know Georgette. Phil, mindful of all those who lived in wholesome fear of other men's wives, preserved his scepticism, with an inscrutable eye. He knew that women have no love for their husband's bachelor friends, and he was confronted by the gross unfairness of nature as he stood on the threshold of Kirke Lane's flat, and reluctantly pressed the button.

The young journalist opened the door. He was a thin, sallow man with a humorous mouth set crookedly between deep creases. His eyes darted from his friend's face to his watch, and Phil guessed the cause of his nervousness. He was in a curious position. To his friends and his public he had figured hitherto as an incorrigible fatalist with a dash of cynicism. Present circumstances labelled him a happy man on the verge of matrimony. How was he to reconcile the two states, and how would the friend and fiancée of such different moods agree?

"Hullo, old chap! She'll be here in a moment." Kirke grasped his hand and drew him in.

Phil looked round the room, and in the light of his friend's venture old familiar objects took on a new meaning. The heavy Dutch furniture and the ponderous armchairs had always oppressed the artist when he compared them with the room of his dreams, where light and space and proportion would lend a classic simplicity to the whole. After all, the thought of marriage was not inconsistent in a man who depended for comfort on chocolate-colored paint and massive chests of drawers.

They sat down and forced a desultory conversation, avoiding the subject that was uppermost in both their minds.

Kirke started at the sound of the bell.

"There she is!"

He rose and hurried into the passage.

A moment later Georgette Farlow, sheathed in grey fur, stood in the doorway.

Kirke pushed behind her.

"Georgie, this is Phil—at last! Phil—Georgette. You two have got to be friends."

She was short, but he liked her reddish hair and warm coloring; her "make-up" struck him as clever but superfluous, for she was very young, and as fresh as a flower.

She sank into one of Kirke's enormous armchairs with her little arched feet barely reaching the ground, and her fur coat falling open to reveal tints of pale coral.

"Are you on the paper, too?" she asked. Her low, husky voice had a certain charm.

"No," answered Phil, smiling. "But we lunch together all the same."

"He's on *The Decorator*—he draws," put in Kirke.

"Oh, really?" said Georgette eagerly. "Then, if you're an artist, perhaps you'll tell me what you think of this?"

She held out a small miniature case.

"It's by a friend of mine. Kirke hasn't seen it yet, but if you approve he shall have it for his own."

Phil came forward, his hand met hers and he paused.

"Tell me first," he said, "if it's an opinion of the work or the likeness you want?"

"Must there be a distinction?"

"Oh, enormous."

"Well, you don't know much about me," said Georgette, "so you'd better confine your criticism to the artist."

Phil glanced at the painting and turned sharply to his friend, but Kirke was smiling at Georgette.

"You'd better show it to him," he said roughly.

She put out her hand and glanced up with lifted brows.

"I don't care for it," he went on in answer to her look. "It may be a likeness, but as a work of art—in my opinion—it's rotten bad."

Georgette made no answer, and he saw her pout her lips as she thrust the miniature into her bag. Her face was a shade too broad, but there was fine drawing in the sweep of her drooping lids.

In the awkward pause that followed, Kirke said nothing to fill in the breach, and Phil convinced himself that his own silence was the most natural of the three. Nevertheless he knew that in offending Georgette he had committed the unforgivable sin. She took no further notice of him till he turned from his friend to say good-bye; when he put out his hand she raised her eyes and held his with a long curious stare. He was amused, and it gave him a chance of remarking casually:

"Well—I expect I shall be seeing you both again some time."

"Why, of course——"

But Kirke spoke without conviction and looked at Georgette. Before the girl could open her lips, Phil slipped out and closed the door behind him.

II.

PHIL had sometimes seen that look in women's eyes; it was a look of awakening interest that carried with it a challenge. It threw a light on Georgette's relations with his friend, and suggested that in spite of her vaunted air of independence she had no moorings and no real source of strength. When he met Kirke at lunch on the following day he showed himself full of curiosity.

The journalist at once dropped his vaguely apologetic manner and answered briskly:

"Oh, yes, she's very independent. Her father left her a little money when he died a year ago, and she shares a flat with a pal—a jolly sort of girl. She does some sort of research work at the British Museum—Georgette, I mean. No, you wouldn't think it, but as a matter of fact she's got a theory about work; says it's the only way to achieve spiritual happiness."

Phil's lip twitched with amusement.

"Where did you come across her?"

"Well," confessed Kirke, "to tell you the truth I met her first at Merial Silver's. Merial, you know, has an evening once a week when choice spirits blow in in Turkish trousers and read their own poetry aloud."

"Oh, Lord!" said Phil.

"Georgette never really belonged to that crowd—some pal dragged her in. But I got in the way of going there to meet her, and then seeing the girls back to the flat. It's a cosy little place—I've stayed there till all hours smoking and gossiping with the two of them."

There was a short silence, and Kirke added shyly:

"She took rather a fancy to you, Phil. She wants you to come to the ballet with us on Friday night. We're trying for the first row of the gallery."

"Right!" said Phil. "She's charming, my dear fellow, and I congratulate you. By the way, I rather fancy she wants someone to look after her."

"What do you mean?" demanded the other.

Phil shrugged his shoulders and got up from the table.

Three days later the three pressed close to the railing of the gallery in one of the big theaters, where from the height the stage looked like a small patch of brilliant light at the far end of a telescope. Phil had seen the performance several times before, and his eye wandered to Georgette. She was sitting with eyes fixed and lips half open; carried away by the music and movement. In her enthusiasm she was so unselfconscious that he thought her face must reveal some trace of her character. He stared, puzzled afresh, and looked across at his friend. Kirke was trying to focus his attention on the ballet, but his thoughts were clearly elsewhere; he was in love with an idealized conception of the red-haired girl at his side. Phil wondered if Georgette returned his passion: she showed no sign.

The lights blazed and she turned to him with eyes full of tears.

"I simply don't know where I am," she murmured.

It surprised him that she should ignore her lover, and he nodded gently towards Kirke.

"Isn't he amused?" he asked.

She shrugged her shoulders and retorted:

"Oh, he doesn't like it! He can't be clever about it."

"I don't think you ought to say that," said Phil doubtfully.

"I suppose I may say what I think," she returned with a flash of defiance. "For an artist you really are conventional."

She turned to Kirke. "Darling, Phil won't let me talk to him. He thinks you'll be jealous."

Phil said lightly,

"Miss Farlow, you're a most changeable and untruthful young woman."

They parted in good spirits at the end of the evening and arranged to meet for lunch on the following day. One engagement led to another, and Phil found that contrary to his expectations the trio was a success. If the men seldom had an opportunity of meeting on the old footing, the girl on the other hand was the best of friends with them both, and there was no end to the little lunches, dinners and "pits" that they enjoyed in each other's company. Phil gave up trying to understand Georgette, and marveled at her effect on his friend, whose point of view had apparently undergone a radical change. The twists and kinks of his original humour, and the ironic wit that made him palatable to the public, were now confined to his work; the new man was calm, happy and completely at the mercy of the woman he trusted.

Now and then Phil Coniston, refusing to accompany the other two, retired to his rooms in Bloomsbury, where a large Victorian sideboard, two threadbare footstools, and innumerable brackets packed with cheap china bore witness to a comfortable if unæsthetic landlady. Phil was too lazy to put away the china, but he introduced his own reading lamp with a bold, hand-painted shade, one or two subtle prints, and sundry collections of books, prints and folios.

He was lounging before a dying fire with a cold pipe at about half-past ten one evening, when voices and footsteps gathered in the passage, and the landlady's youngest daughter thumped on the door.

"Gent to see you," she shouted, and clattered away upstairs.

Kirke Lane strode into the room. His face twitched in the old nervous way.

"Had to look you up, Phil. I want your advice—read this."

Phil took the letter, and raised his brows as he read along the lines.

"Three months in Rome!" he murmured. "What wouldn't I give for three months in Rome!"

"I've twenty-four hours to decide in," said the journalist shortly.

"My dear fellow, you're surely not thinking of refusing?"

"Oh, it's an excellent offer—I know that. And I ought to keep in with the firm."

"Well, then——?"

Kirke dropped into a low chair and glared at the ceiling.

"Fact is, old man, I can't bear the notion of leaving Georgette. I may be a fool—but I've got a presentiment about Georgette."

Phil turned sharply.

"Look here, Kirke, you've got to pull yourself together and accept this offer. It's too good to refuse—it'll affect your future and hers, too. As for Georgette—of course it's blamed hard on you. But she shan't come to any harm—I'll look after her."

Kirke nodded slowly. "I suppose you're right, old chap. And if you'll keep an eye on her—just to prevent her from being bored, you know——"

"On my honor, I'll look after her," said Phil, and the two men shook hands.

III

PHIL kept his word, and as the weeks passed he began to wonder if he had looked after Georgette too well. She was a charming companion: spontaneous, responsive to impressions, and prettier than ever; but her light-hearted laughter troubled him when he thought of his friend. One day he asked her casually if she had written to Kirke.

"You think I don't care for him!" she flashed.

They were fighting their way along the Strand; when he caught up with her again she looked at him steadily, and remarked:

"You're making a very great mistake, Phil."

He was relieved and said no more. But on another afternoon he took her to see some pastels in a deserted gallery. The room was warm and stuffy: he thought she looked pale, and suggested going out into the open, but she refused to stir. Suddenly she dropped down on one of the dim plush seats and burst into tears. The unfortunate episode revived Phil's qualms, and he thought it wiser to leave her undisturbed for a while.

He was thinking about her a week later when he came down to breakfast and found her note:

"Coward—I want to be amused. Meet me at the Soho to-night at eight—G."

Phil tapped his egg and wondered how far she meant to go. He had rather enjoyed the subtle flirtation in which they had indulged since the day of their first meeting; it was amusing and harmless, seldom extending beyond a glance and a smile, and he had felt that they understood one another. If Georgette was going to spoil it. . . .

He jumped up from the table and filled his pipe in front of the fire. If Georgette was going to spoil it the fault would be his: in his anxiety to keep his promise to Kirke, he had overstepped the bounds of discretion.

When he reached the restaurant she had already taken possession of a small table under a mirror. Her long white gloves lay across the cloth. She greeted him with a smile, and pulling out a chair opposite to her, he paid a silent tribute to the new black hat, and noticed that her cheeks were paler than usual. It occurred to him after a few minutes, that she had discarded her make-up, and at the same time she said:

"Phil, I'm awfully depressed to-night—you must be nice to me."

He fell naturally into a sympathetic key, and soon found that he was telling her bit by bit the most intimate passages of his life. She smoked one cigarette after another, and only spoke now and again to encourage him.

As he helped her on with her coat, he thought: "This is the first time there has been anything like real friendship between us."

When they reached the street door the rain was falling in perpendicular streaks, dancing on the lamp reflections in the black shining pavement. Phil sent the porter for a taxi, and while they waited Georgette leaned against the door-post and looked up at the murky sky. He watched her, wondering what she was thinking, and sad for his part that the evening was over.

The taxi skidded up to the curb.

Phil, shouting the address to the driver, scrambled in after Georgette and sharply pulled up the window. She had dropped into the corner without speaking, and as they passed a street lamp he was shocked to see her face dragged with misery. He was afraid to question her. The rain beating against the roof of the car, gradually grew fainter, and when they slowed down at the flat the shower was nearly over.

Georgette was herself again.

"You're coming in for a smoke," she announced.

He shook his head.

"Oh, Phil," she cried, suddenly clinging to his arm, "you must come. Ida's away—I'm all by myself. You needn't stay long, you know, but do just come in."

He closed the door and paid the driver.

Georgette's flat was small and comparatively luxurious. There were too many cushions and photographs about, but her vases were full of exquisite flowers. Phil helped himself to a cigarette and stretched his feet to the fire while the girl threw her hat on to the table and mixed him a whiskey and soda. He thought she seemed rather pathetic, and for the first time he looked at the future from her point of view, and hoped that the marriage would not be delayed.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked abruptly.

"You and Kirke."

"Then don't do it."

He was silent. She was sitting sideways on a small chair leaning her arms against the tall straight back, and her head on her arms. She was so pretty and so helpless, with the little tired pout on her lips, that unconsciously he leaned forward to stare at her.

"Phil!" she murmured, "kiss me!"

Phil sat quite still. His eyes roved over the room for a photograph of Kirke, and returned to Georgette.

"I'm not going to kiss you," he said steadily.

She sprang up in a fury.

"You——!" she cried, stamping her foot. "How dare you insult me?"

"Sit down, Georgette, and don't talk nonsense."

Her face was crimson.

"I hate you! What do you take me for? What do you call yourself? You'll start jawing about Kirke—I know you. Well, and do you think that in five years' time Kirke will care a damn whether you kissed me or not? Oh, don't talk to me—you're a fool!"

She was incoherent. He grasped her arms and pushed her down on the chair.

"Georgette, I don't care what either you or Kirke will think in five years' time, or even what poor Kirke would think now if he were here. This is my business. A man has some standard of decent behavior—women probably don't understand. But one day when you're cooler I'll tell you about it."

He let himself out of the flat, and his hand shook as he pulled back the outer door.

IV

PHIL heard no more of Georgette. When Kirke returned at Easter he managed to be out of town, and during the Spring weeks that followed he shut himself up with his work. Once or twice he met his old friend at the restaurant, but Kirke, suspecting a quarrel, made only the briefest allusion to his future wife. Phil gathered that the wedding would take place in June.

He and Kirke had already drifted so far apart in interests and associations that Phil's plan to spend the whole summer painting on the Welsh Coast was accepted as a matter of course; consequently the artist retired to his inn among the black rocks, sent a telegram, and read the announcement of his friend's wedding on the following morning.

He returned to town at the beginning of October, and on the following Sunday threaded his way across Piccadilly to an Italian restaurant where Sydney Marsden, the actor, was celebrating a

recent success by a supper to several of his friends. Phil arrived early, and crossing to the table indicated by the waiter, found himself face to face with Kirke Lane and his wife.

"Hullo, old chap! How are you? Tell us your adventures!" cried the journalist, wringing him cordially by the hand.

"You're filling out, my lad," was Phil's reply.

He thought they both seemed amazingly happy. Georgette was radiant with shining eyes, but material well-being had rubbed the bloom from her charm; she was prettier, at the cost of some of her mystery.

"We must see more of you, man," Kirke was saying. "He must come and dine with us one night next week, eh, Georgie?"

"Why, of course he must!" cried Georgette gaily. "He's to consider himself forgiven."

Phil stared, and she turned to Kirke.

"You know he was rather a naughty boy when you were in Rome—but after all these weeks we'll bury the hatchet and be friends again."

"Good," said Kirke Lane, smiling tenderly at his wife.

Phil looked at her steadily. Later when they found themselves side by side, and separated from Kirke by the other guests, he leaned over and told her in three words what he thought of her.

ON A LOAD OF HAY

By Edith Harlowe

THEY told me that if I saw a load of hay and made a wish and then shut my eyes until the hay passed by, my wish would be granted.

The other day I saw a load of hay passing and I remembered what they had told me.

So I stopped in the street and made a beautiful wish, and closed my eyes to wait until the load of hay passed by so that my wish would come true. . . .

And then the hay wagon ran over me.

TO forget easily: that is what makes us young. To remember: that is what makes us old.

IF a woman feels perfectly safe with a man, she also feels perfectly indifferent to him.

THE DRYAD

A ONE-ACT PLAY

By George Sterling

SCENE: A glade in a forest, sloping gently westward. It is comparatively free from trees, except for an immense pine in its center. A few feet from this tree stands a Man about thirty-five years of age. He carries a large covered basket. From a distance comes

A WOMAN'S VOICE:

Henry!

THE MAN:

Yes, Sarah.

A WOMAN'S VOICE:

I am going down to the beach with the children. I shall return in half an hour. Have the water for the coffee boiling.

THE MAN:

Yes, Sarah. (*He deposits the basket near the foot of the tree, and stands gazing westward. A minute passes. He sighs. Suddenly a slender white arm is extended from the trunk of the tree, almost touching his face. He recoils. The arm is waved gently in the outer air for a moment. The Man steps backward and to the rear. A Dryad emerges from the tree. She is beautiful, and apparently seventeen years of age. As the Philistine will insist on her being attired, let us allot her the shadow of a fig-leaf. She does not notice the Man at once.*)

THE DRYAD:

No rain! What a pity! I love the ghost-rain. Pan says that—(*Notices the man*). Ah! a mortal! How wonderful! (*She approaches the Man, who shrinks away from her.*)

THE MAN:

Who are you? What are you?

THE DRYAD:

Why, I'm a dryad. Surely you know what dryads are. And you're a mortal! Why do you have cloth all over you like that?

THE MAN:

It's a custom.

THE DRYAD:

The Greeks didn't.

THE MAN:

They do now. Do you see mortals so seldom?

THE DRYAD:

I may come out only once in a hundred years. The last mortal I saw had even more clothes on than you. And he had a big string of beads.

THE MAN:

He must have been a friar.

THE DRYAD:

Yes—and when he saw me he did this (*crosses herself*) and ran. Why did he run?

THE MAN:

He found you too attractive, I suppose.

THE DRYAD:

Do you?

THE MAN:

Not so I'd run *from* you.

THE DRYAD:

I've seen so few mortals! They were always hunting, and always afraid of me. Don't *you* be afraid of me!

THE MAN:

I'm not.

THE DRYAD:

I'm glad. Why do mortals—(*A child calls shrilly.*) What's that?

THE MAN:

One of my children.

THE DRYAD:

What are children?

THE MAN:

They're something like you and me, only much smaller.

THE DRYAD:

Why do you say it's one of yours?

THE MAN:

I'm its father.

THE DRYAD:

How does one become a father?

THE MAN:

You'd not understand.

THE DRYAD:

What are children like? As little as rabbits?

THE MAN:

No—bigger than that; but still, much smaller than you.

THE DRYAD:

Oh! they must be *dear!* I'd love to have one! Will you show me how to get one?

THE MAN:

No! no! At least, not now. And say: would you mind standing this way a little? I want this tree to be between you and the ocean.

THE DRYAD:

Why? Is it a game?

THE MAN:

No. It's on my wife's account. She's a peculiar woman.

THE DRYAD:

What's a wife?

THE MAN:

I'm afraid I'd have trouble in making you understand.

THE DRYAD:

Don't try then; I hate trouble. Is she with your children?

THE MAN:

Yes—she's their mother, you see.

THE DRYAD:

What's a mother?

THE MAN:

That would be troubling you again.

THE DRYAD:

Don't, then. But where does one obtain children?

THE MAN:

They come to one from God.

THE DRYAD:

Which god?

THE MAN:

The God.

THE DRYAD:

Oh! you mean the biggest one. He can squeeze through only the very largest redwood. They say he's terribly bored. Greece was *so* much nicer than California.

THE MAN:

Did you live in Greece?

THE DRYAD:

In Thessaly. But I was a tiny thing then—like one of your children, perhaps. I could squeeze out from a birch-tree.

THE MAN:

Is it confining to live in a tree?

THE DRYAD:

Why, stupid, we don't *live* in trees! A tree is only a doorway.

THE MAN:

What's beyond?

THE DRYAD:

Come and see! They'll let me love if I can bring home a mortal.

THE MAN:

Have you never loved?

THE DRYAD:

Oh, I'm too young—not much over nineteen hundred years. But in sixty-five years more I'll be two thousand, and may do as I please. Watch me *then!*

THE MAN:

What do *you* know about love?

THE DRYAD:

Trust *me!* I've not eyes for nothing! And you? Were *you* never in love?

THE MAN:

Once.

THE DRYAD:

Why only once?

THE MAN:

When one's married, that's supposed to end it.

THE DRYAD:

To end loving?

THE MAN:

To end loving all but one's wife.

THE DRYAD:

Does it?

THE MAN:

Sometimes.

THE DRYAD:

But what *is* this marrying? Will you marry me?

THE MAN:

If I had two wives, I might be put in prison.

THE DRYAD:

What's prison? But never mind! Can't you get rid of your wife?

THE MAN:

Not easily. Then, there are the children.

THE DRYAD:

Oh! let her keep the children. We can ask that god for plenty more. Come, now! (*She holds out her hand to him.*) Come Beyond with me. Wonderful things are there—things you never dreamt of!

THE MAN:

My wife wouldn't approve.

THE DRYAD:

Why are you always talking about your wife? It isn't very flattering to *me*. Will she dance with you in the moonlight and the rain?

THE MAN:

In the rain? She'd be afraid of wetting her clothes.

THE DRYAD:

Oh! does she wear clothes?

THE MAN:

Rather!

THE DRYAD:

Why?

THE MAN:

You'd not understand.

THE DRYAD:

"Not understand" again! You must think I'm awfully stupid. *Am* I stupid?

THE MAN:

You're beautiful!

THE DRYAD:

Hum! Evidently the same thing. Would you love me if I wore clothes? Go and bring me your wife's clothes!

THE MAN:

It would be hard to get them.

THE DRYAD:

Give me yours!

THE MAN:

No! No! At least not now. (*Nervously.*) Would you mind standing back there, behind the tree?

THE DRYAD:

How silly! Of course not! But what's that? (*She points to the basket.*)

THE MAN:

Things to eat and drink. We're on a picnic.

THE DRYAD:

What's—never mind! Open it!

(*They seat themselves. The Man opens the basket, and takes out sundry viands and bottles. The Dryad picks up an apple, smells it, and tries a mouthful. An expression of distaste comes over her face, she removes the bit of apple, and hides it behind her.*)

THE DRYAD:

(*Holding out the apple*) What *is* this?

THE MAN:

That's an apple.

THE DRYAD:

What are they for?

THE MAN:

They're to eat.

THE DRYAD:

What a pity! You should taste the fruit in *my* country. (*Takes up a can of sardines.*) And what's this?

THE MAN:

Sardines.

THE DRYAD:

(*Biting the can.*) How can you eat anything so hard?

THE MAN:

Oh! the sardines are inside. One opens it with a knife, or something. I don't think you'd care for them.

THE DRYAD:

(*Picking up a bottle.*) What's this?

THE MAN:

That's a bottle of root-beer, for the children.

THE DRYAD:

I don't know what beer is; but imagine making a drink out of roots!

THE MAN:

(*Opening the bottle.*) It's not so bad. Try it.

THE DRYAD:

(*Drinks from the bottle. Makes a grimace.*) Ugh! Let the children have it! . . . What's in that black bottle?

THE MAN:

That's claret, for me and my wife.

THE DRYAD:

Claret?

THE MAN:

It's a wine. Have you never seen wine?

THE DRYAD:

Oceans of it. Give me some. (*The Man pours a glassful, which she tastes. Chokes over it.*) Oh, dear! Do you call that *wine?* You should taste *our* wine! (*Pointing to a cardboard box.*) What's in there? Ambrosia?

THE MAN:

No—ham.

THE DRYAD:

Don't give me any! I'm afraid I don't like the food and drink of mortals. . . . But tell me; have you hoofs, like Pan?

THE MAN:

No—I've feet, like yours, only larger.

THE DRYAD:

Then why do you cover them up? Why don't you wear sandals?

THE MAN:

Sandals are out of date. All respectable people now wear shoes.

THE DRYAD:

Shoes! How funny! Let me try them on.

THE MAN:

I'm sure you'd not like them.

THE DRYAD:

I want to try them once, anyhow. This is the only chance I've ever had. (*The Man takes off his shoes, number ten, which the Dryad puts on. She*

stands up and takes a few steps.) How awful! How do you ever manage to dance in them? (*She tries to dance.*) Really, I think Pluto must have put them on you as a punishment. Have you desecrated a shrine?

THE MAN:

No—we leave that to the Kaiser.

THE DRYAD:

I suppose you think I'm going to ask what a Kaiser is. I'm *not* going to.

THE MAN:

I'm not a member of any church, but just the same I'd rather not describe him.

THE DRYAD:

Don't! Let's dance! (*She kicks off the shoes and holds out her hands to him.*)

THE MAN:

I've never learned to dance.

THE DRYAD:

Come! I'll teach you. (*She takes his hands, and capers round and round him. He stands awkwardly erect in the same spot.*) Jump! can't you? Jump! Leap up in the air and kick your legs, as the fauns do! Oh! but you're stupid, or cruel! I don't believe you *want* to dance with me!

THE MAN:

I'd love to, but not now. Come—please stand behind that tree! And say, would you mind if I wrapped this table-cloth about you? (*He picks up a red table-cloth and drapes it around her.*) There! That's a bit better! Now, if you don't mind, stand here, please. (*He leads her to a position east of the pine.*) There! That'll do finely!

THE DRYAD:

I don't like this ugly cloth. It's too warm, and it scratches me.

THE MAN:

Please wear it just a minute, for *my* sake.

THE DRYAD:

Well, for a minute. But tell me: do you do anything except picnic?

THE MAN:

Yes! I'm a clerk in a shoe-store. It's no picnic.

THE DRYAD:

Why do you stay there?

THE MAN:

It beats starving.

THE DRYAD:

How long will you have to do that?

THE MAN:

Till I'm an old man, I suppose.

THE DRYAD:

And then?

THE MAN:

Then I'll rest for a few years, I hope.

THE DRYAD:

And then?

THE MAN:

Death comes next.

THE DRYAD:

And then?

THE MAN:

I don't know. Nothing, I suppose.

THE DRYAD:

(*Casting aside the table-cloth.*) Not for *you!* You are too fine for that! Come with *me*, now! Come with me to my own country!

THE MAN:

Tell me of it.

THE DRYAD:

It lies, as this, at an ocean's edge. But that sea is of wine, and its shore the dust of pearls. No sun is there, but day goes by as a golden haze, in which one drowses dreamily, and wakes to drink forgetfulness from cups of topaz, and to know the taste of strange fruits. Come with me to that country!

THE MAN:

Tell me more!

THE DRYAD:

There is always music in that land—sweet strains and sad, distilled from

the grief and joy of mortals. One sees not the Harp-player, but his hands are on the chords forever. Come Beyond with me!

THE MAN:

Go on! Go on!

THE DRYAD:

Alas, for you, who know not our nights! Then indeed the soul and body wake, drunk with their immortality. In our sky are seven moons, none of the same hue. They weave delicate webs of color, nameless and shifting. In their light we dance by that sea of wine, whose foam, purple and odorous, we wear for crowns. Come with me to that land!

THE MAN:

Tell me all!

THE DRYAD:

Beyond the beach are meadows of violet, through which stray paths that lead to dim and ancient woodlands. There the flowers are fadeless, heavy with fragrance and softly luminous. The murmur of love is there—all the music of its old enchantment. Surely you will come with me!

THE MAN:

I will go with you!

THE DRYAD:

Ah! you shall never regret! I will be——

A WOMAN'S VOICE:

Henry! Come and help the children up this bank! (*The Man starts in the direction of the sound. The Dryad sinks to one knee before him, holding forth her arms.*)

THE DRYAD:

Do not leave me! The time is now—or never! We may entreat a mortal but once. Listen! There is no sorrow in that land—no weariness nor care. You shall be made immortal, and beautiful—how far more—beautiful. You shall be——

A WOMAN'S VOICE:

Henry! Do you hear me?

THE MAN:

Right away, my dear!

THE DRYAD:

Ah! *Come with me!* Come Beyond with me! I shall be your true one, your worshipper, for you will have made love known to me—love, at last, *love!* Come with me, swiftly, swiftly! I shall never——

A WOMAN'S VOICE:

Henry Lister, are you coming, or *not?*

(*The Man takes a step forward. The Dryad clasps him around the knees.*)

THE DRYAD:

Come with me! What is better than happiness? My lips shall whisper mysteries to you. You shall remember nothing sad. The tears of my rapture shall be on your face.

A WOMAN'S VOICE:

Henry Lister!

(*The Man stoops, loosens the clasp of the Dryad, and, after several hesitations, passes from view. She stands gazing after him.*)

THE DRYAD:

I wonder if all men are like that.

(*Curtain.*)

PAINTED IVORY

By Seumas Le Chat

THE notes of the spinets and violins float slowly across the ballroom like a drift of golden rain. The flickering yellow-shaded candles seem to swing on the mist of sound. They are like fervid ephemeral fruits new-shaken from the orchards of the gods and still trembling from their fall—fruits kissed to a transiency of ripeness by the tempered passion of some rococo noontide and dropped from Heaven with such a graceful weariness from flight that they still burn with a faded fervour.

The dancers interweave like a scarf of swooning butterflies. They flutter and mingle like a rainbow of tired dreams. They languish together in a veiled iridescence.

Daintily echo their high heels throbbing on the polished floor like the bloodless heart-beats of false lovers.

Frail-hued satins and brocade seem to materialize the subtle scents that hang in the air, and the tricked senses half confuse the gleaming spray of gems, with the silver ripples of women's laughter.

Through a great window, opened for air, one glimpses the garden where Chinese lanterns, mottled pasquins of the moon, bulge and drowse amid the gridelin shadow of the summer night.

The moon herself slips low, seeking to send an amber wavelet to the feet of the girl who has paused to rest on the cushioned divan which crouches like a squat monster by the window.

A score of gallants swarm around the couch in rival courtship. She has given away all her dances except the Grand Minuet, now about to begin, for which it has been her whim to keep herself unpartnered that she may be free to choose as her wilfulness dictates, even up to the last moment.

The claimants sit at her feet, and laugh and chatter around her, striving to win her favor with their wit or pleading.

At the farther door there enters one in a black mask. He sweeps the room with roving eyes over which the tired white lids droop when he sees her.

Pauselessly he cleaves the throng in her direction and soon he bows low to her surprised glances.

With a little sudden laugh of caprice she rises and sweeps him a courtesy.

Their hands flutter together like two birds in love and he leads her lightly into the dawning dance.

Hush! . . . For a moment the violins are dumb at her beauty, and the candles flare still on the held breath of the spinets. . . . The next the instruments burst forth in a stately storm of goblin music in which the candles quiver like aspens of fire, as though eager to fall in homage at her dancing feet. Like fiery aspens the hooded planes strain and tremble to be free—like eyes of love they dream and glow. Deeply orange are the shades, slipping to a primrose pallor, and in the gown of the dancers soft orange keeps silken tryst with ivory, and ivory again dreams into copper shadows.

Elusively as an oriole in a mist she drifts, clothed in hues that faint and etherealise with all the elfin caducity of the century, yet somehow her beauty is a-thrill with a swift life by which it blossoms forth, vividly as a wood-flower in a hothouse, from the exquisite weary women who sway and

posture in the surrounding moresque of iridian languor.

There is about her an indescribably attractive effect of harmonious incongruity. She seems a forest-child stolen by the witch of fashion—moulded of pearl and a poppy-flower, of daffodils and wine. . . . She is the painted lily—or perhaps, rather, the powdered anemone . . . a wind-flower disguised as an orchid . . . a moonbeam dancing in a masquerade. . . . Artificiality clings to her as lightly as sea-spray and she wears adorable affectations like drops of dew. . . . Her yellow gown dances around her like sunlight on a flower . . .

She is an oread who has decked her wilding body in a mountain-mist snatched from Lancret's palette . . . She is the changeling fairy princess who has but lately left the wet-eyed flowers of her exile for the gold and perfumes of the King's palace.

On her forefinger gleams an emerald like a raindrop from the green wood, and she has put a patch on her cheek where the wind kissed her. Her slim hands have received the baise-mains of the sun. The fingers' delicacy of olive taper to rosy nails like eburnine roses that flush at the petals' edge, and although powder blanches her face to the mystical pallor of the nenuphar, 'tis easy to guess that the amorous Apollo has not resisted the uptost hazardry of her chin. . . . Her lips are stained scarlet with the juice of forest berries which she would have you believe to be rouge, and surely the light powder that veils the blue-dark curls of her hair is but a shower of the hawthorn snow. . . . In spite of their high-heeled golden shoes her feet seem twin petals of the wind-blown gorse, and her fan of painted ivory and silk is shaped like a butterfly. . . .

Surely she has danced with the fauns on the dark grass—surely little winds surround her feet. The starlight is dancing in the sapphire pools of her eyes. Her heart dances beneath a sea-foam of lace . . . her soul dances amid a flavescent daintiness of silk. . . .

To and fro she floats with the Black Mask; together they twine a Pavonian arabesque of slumber. He drifts athwart the crowd in his suit of ebony and silver like a moon-laced night cloud in a fainting sunset. Across the slow mazes of the dance he wooes her. . . . With courtly obeisance he strews the rose-leaves of his love beneath her feet. . . . They part . . . and his glances fly across the space between them and circle her childish throat with kisses. . . . They meet . . . and his eyes smile downward and pelt her with the flowers of his dreams. Her hand is a sweet-smelling rose-petal caught lightly in the carved ivory of his fingers. . . . The white fire of his ring seems to pierce the melting snow-wreath of her ruffle. . . . A tiny scented sigh escaping from her lips takes refuge in his heart. . . .

From the painted ceiling Eros chuckles with a fat crumpled gallien-dise and shoots a random golden arrow which strikes the fan in her hand. She lets it go with a little cry and the Black Mask, dropping to one knee, catches it as it falls fluttering. He holds the still-quivering luteous butterfly between his hands.

"Madam," he laughs up at her, "I swear I have caught your soul."

He watches shadowy birds of mirth brush maddeningly across her lips and drown for their audacity in her eyes.

"Sir," she answers demurely, "I have heard that a soul is monstrous difficult to hold."

"Truly," he says, "the way of it might be learned were the owner to unmask."

Whereat, for all answer, her eyelashes tremble mockingly down and sweep the mask's velvet with a silken caress.

Delicately she poises as if on the edge of flight while he kneels before her like a statue of ebony and silver.

Between them on his outflung hands the ivory and silken butterfly quivers in the last golden whisper of the music which is lingering softly into an aureate sleep. . . .

THE BIG WOMAN OF THE LITTLE HOUSE

By Rita Wellman

MRS. LILA MAY lived at Owanoke. She had named it herself: "Something not too Indian—and with a nice English sound." Mrs. May's lawns were like her coiffure—there was nothing natural about either. She was a large, well-corseted woman with delicate, pretty features lost in soft flesh. Her feet were too small, and she wore ridiculous, expensive shoes with cruel little heels. She had lost an elderly husband early in her married life and had been celebrating her good fortune for ten years.

In spite of eight servants at Owanoke and six dogs and seven cats, Mrs. May was lonely. She had tried nearly everything to prevent it. At one time she was known as a crack shot—clay pigeons. At another she was a collector of antiques. She had also gone in for bridge prizes and golf trophies. Of course, in the natural scheme of things she should have found another husband, but in spite of her efforts in this direction she had been unsuccessful.

Arrowdale, where Owanoke spread its great lawns, was rich in happily married people. Mrs. May thought she had never seen so many happily married people in her life. It was most discouraging. She finally fell back upon philanthropy. She owned a nice stretch of land across the road from Owanoke, the road which she had built herself "at great expense," as she was always reminding Arrowdale. What could be more appropriate than to build a little house facing this road and rent it at a small price to some small and worthy family?

As in most cases with a new fad, she caught up the idea furiously. It stirred her imagination. A little family of nice comfortable young people to whom she could play fairy-godmother. It was beautiful. She would plan their house from the ground up. When they moved in she would plan their lives from the ground up. They would have children; those children would have children.

There was an endless vista of power for her. And to do good! How she wanted to do good! To have an influence over other human destinies!

Then a happy idea seized her. In doing good, why not at the same time help some struggling young architect? They were always struggling and nearly always young, so she proceeded to advertise her wants in several papers. The advertisement was rather appealing, she thought:

> I am going to build a house for my own pleasure—the pleasure of seeing other people happy in it. It must be built for plain people—but we must supply them with refined taste. If you are interested, come and see me.
>
> L. MAY.

II.

ONE morning while her maid was shampooing her soft, curly blonde hair (and giving it the weekly bath which turned it an interesting copper red) a tall figure presented itself at the entrance of the loggia and stood in sun-flecked silence curiously watching her. Mrs. May jumped up in embarrass-

ment, overturning the dye-bath into poor Turner's lap and changing her apron to a sickly mineral green.

The tall figure had a discomforting dignity and an irritating humor, she thought, when she went toward it, dragging her bath towel and green silk negligée in confusion about her.

"My name's Gregory," the young man said. "Larry Gregory. I am an architect. I saw your advertisement. Are you Mrs. May?"

"Yes. You're too young."

He laughed.

"Too young—for what?"

"For building a house, of course. It's for pleasure. But it's got to be practical. I'm building it for poor people to live in."

"Poor people! That's a splendid idea. What kind of poor people?"

"Any poor people who want to live in it."

His green eyes, like a summer sea, were keen in hers. She thought she had never seen anyone so beautiful, nor so uncomfortably self-assured. She hated him at once.

"Why are you building it?" he asked coolly.

"For my own amusement."

He threw back his head and shrugged, and it gave her a most unpleasant sensation.

"There we have it! You're reversing Marie Antoinette. Well, that's modern enough—because it's so damned hypocritical."

All the time his keen green eyes were noting her, her undone, half dyed hair, her dye-spattered negligée, the loggia, Turner with the dyed apron—and beyond they found the house and took in its points in a cold cynical way that made her flesh creep.

Owanoke! He dared to criticize Owanoke! She had designed Owanoke herself.

"Don't you like my house?" she asked, with a nervous little laugh.

"No, it's rotten."

She received the barb deep in her soft flesh. How she despised this self-sufficient, rude, brutal, intolerable young man!

"I designed it myself," she told him, meeting his eyes with large, prominent, accusing blue ones.

"So I fancied," the young man said crisply, and continued to look upon her darling house in that denuding, devastating way.

"Have you ever designed a house?" she asked him sharply.

"Didn't I tell you that I was an architect?"

"Yes, you did. But I asked you—have you ever designed a house?"

He looked down upon her for a moment in silence, then his brown face broke into a beautiful smile, then he laughed, doubling up in glee like a small boy.

"No," he admitted. "I never did."

She saw that she had gained a point, and that by doing so she had risen in the young man's estimation. This healed the wound he had made. It made her more proud than anything in her life had ever done, even marrying a millionaire. She spoke sharply to Turner—for the effect.

"Take all the things away, Turner. We'll finish to-morrow. I have some business to talk over."

"But Mrs. May's hair isn't all dy—washed yet."

"Well, we'll have to let it go."

"I think it's a very nice shade now," the young architect said soothingly. "Very unusual."

Again their eyes met, and the challenge sent the blood into Mrs. May's soft cheeks.

"Where is your land?" he asked her as they sat on the comfortable wicker chairs.

"Across the road from my place. I haven't accepted you yet."

"Were you thinking of it, even?"

"I don't know what you can do."

"Yes, you do. I told you I'd never built a house in my life."

"I could try you as a sort of experiment. Do you earn your living building houses?"

He sprawled and stretched out his

long, thin fingers. She felt that he must have had a very careful bringing up—he had such detestable manners.

"You are a very ironical lady," he told her, with a pleasant look.

This pleased her. It was interesting to be called ironical.

"Why?" she asked smiling.

"I tell you I've never had an order and you ask me if I make my living building houses.

"I meant—do you want to?"

"I don't know yet. I can tell better afterwards."

"Do you do everything you like?"

"I mean to," he told her with a smile, and she thought he was the most fascinating young man she had ever seen.

Then she realized her dignity as mistress of Owanoke, as a prominent citizen of Arrowdale, and also her dignity as this young man's future employer. She must be more business-like.

"You must make me some drawings," she said in her most gold-plated manner.

"You wouldn't like them if I did."

"But *I* am the one to please."

"What gave you that idea?"

"What idea?"

"That you are the one to please. You want to put up a house for philanthropical purposes. Your own house you built for yourself. Now, if you are going to build a house for someone else naturally you are the last person who ought to be consulted in the matter."

"Who *is* to be consulted then?"

"The man who has to drive by it every day, the man who has to live in it, your architect, and generations to come."

"But how can I build it for the man who has to live in it when I don't know who he is going to be?"

"Make it beautiful, that's all you have to do, and whoever he is, whether he knows it or not, he'll be satisfied."

"But what is beautiful to me may not be beautiful to someone else, and vice versa."

"What is beautiful to *you* may not be beautiful to someone else, but what is beautiful to *me* will be beautiful to *anyone*."

Mrs. May received the blow in silence. It took her breath away. When she recovered she jumped to her feet and faced him in trembling indignation.

"I think you are the rudest, most conceited young man I ever met," she hurled at him shrilly, "and I would not have you build a house for me, no, not if it was to be my last house on earth."

She gathered up her hair and swept past him into the house. Larry Gregory sat smiling in the sunshine. It was a sadly wise smile for a young man. It was the overeducated smile of a young person who has read and thought entirely too much about life, and who has never done anything else. Having failed at everything, he had decided upon being an architect. He had meant to come meekly and earnestly in answer to Mrs. May's interesting advertisement and to talk himself politely and dishonestly into her good graces. But, coming face to face with an employer, a bourgeoise with half-dyed hair and a tight little upper lip which spelled a desire for power, all the carefully nurtured snobbery of centuries rose in defence, and he insulted her and played upon her as mercilessly as his berserker ancestors would have done.

He felt sorry now. He needed the money. She was a decent sort, for all her narrowness and vanity. She had that American, straight-up-the-back energy which he admired and hated and needed.

"I've made a mess of it," he told himself gloomily. "Because I'm—well, I suppose you'd call it a gentleman. If I weren't I'd have acted like one—and she would have taken me."

Out of professional curiosity to see the place he rambled about, following the loggia out to the tea house, and from there the path to the water—Long Island Sound. There was a neat little beach for Mrs. May's private bath, a neat little bath house painted green. He looked back to the house across the lawns dotted with stumpy little evergreens like warts. How comfortable

she was here in her green Paradise beside the water! How he hated her and all her kind!

He wondered what he wanted in life, anyway. Money, surely. Money to buy what? Beautiful things. That was stupid. Why not create them? He hadn't the energy. He hadn't the faith. He loathed himself even more than he did Mrs. May. He lit a cigarette, his last one, and blew a full, contemptuous mouthful toward Owanoke, then he climbed one of Mrs. May's carefully constructed stone walls and cut out over her wheat fields. He was called back by a gardener yelling—

"Young man! Young man! The missus wants you."

He smiled in triumph and returned over the wall.

He met Mrs. May in the garden, a very self conscious garden like a little girl's party hat, cocked jauntily on the terrace behind the house. She had changed her gown and looked very fashionable and wealthy and ill at ease.

"I want to talk with you," she said with great dignity. "Come into the house."

He decided upon being meek. He followed her without a word. The interior was filled with bad paintings by famous artists, and furniture which had been collected "all over the world," as Mrs. May told him. "All over the under world," he thought. Anyway, it was all very spacious and comfortable—luxurious.

"I am going to take you," she said.

"Thanks."

"I think you need work and are too proud to show it."

Philanthropy! She *was* getting even! He swallowed and tried to look very good.

"Yes, ma'm," he answered.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. Excuse me. I was thinking of school."

She looked at him in irritated curiosity.

"I don't understand you," she said.

"Don't try. What kind of a house do you want?"

"I was thinking—something original."

"Impossible! Even our Colonial—part Greek, part Roman, part necessity."

"But the Germans—think of Munich *nouveau* art."

"Don't!" he implored her.

"Then what do you think would be appropriate?"

"You will leave it to me?"

"Why, yes. Since you are my architect . . ."

"Then everything is settled," he said with a summary sigh. If you will take me over to the lot you want to build on . . ."

IV.

MRS. MAY had an uncomfortable feeling of having given in. But it was worth while. The months of planning that followed were the happiest of her life. Every week-end she met her architect at the station arrayed in gorgeous "country club" finery with a blaze of silk sweaters and parasols and gay, girlish hats. As the little house grew, first on paper and then in reality, so her friendship for Larry Gregory grew, from antagonism to admiration and from admiration to adoration.

The eight servants at Owanoke, and, I have no doubt, the six dogs and seven cats, knew what was wrong with Mrs. May long before she did. If Larry knew he was silent about the matter. But then he had always been adored.

At last the happy days of building were over, and the evergreen tree swung over the gable of the roof had turned brown, and the workmen had long ago slept off their beer hilarity, taken on in honor of The Little House. The real fun, however, had just begun! The tenant! Mrs. May had a passion for blue and white china. She now prepared for her prospective tenant with quantities of blue and white china which she and Larry unwrapped themselves and placed in painfully neat rows in the cottage dresser that Larry had built in the kitchen.

"How quaint and tidy it looks," she

said to Larry. "So simple and pure! Don't you think we might buy some pictures for them? They're sure to spoil the house if they select their own. As you say, real beauty is always appreciated. Our pictures will have an influence over their daily life and, without knowing it, they will become cultured and refined."

She selected some prints and carefully hung them—"The Victory of Samothrace," "The Duchess of Devonshire" and Millet's "Angelus." They planted geraniums in the window boxes, since geraniums, especially if they are red, are always supposed to symbolize domestic peace.

As they were leaving The Little House Mrs. May looked about in satisfaction. She was well pleased with herself. She drew a picture of the little housewife who would keep this sweet little home. Blonde and petite with shell-like ears—and a blue and white checked apron.

That night she wrote another advertisement:

I have built a house for someone to live in. The rent will be almost nothing. For the advantages I give I will exact certain things . The house is beautiful and the tenants therefore must be worthy of it. They must not drink nor swear nor have more than one child. (The house isn't big enough.) I will do everything in my power to make the right tenant happy—but it must be the *right* tenant.

L. MAY.

V.

LARRY was invited to spend the week-end at Owanoke to review the line of prospective tenants. Strangely enough, or not strangely enough, since Americans are suspicious of anything like patronage, the line was absurdly small. The first day brought three reporters, a charity organizer, and a policeman. The second day brought a bridal couple (not married, Mrs. May discovered). The third day brought no one. The fourth day brought a woman dressed in a long Spanish *capa* with a weathered hat on her head and on her feet ballet slippers of faded black. She came into Mrs. May's Italian drawing room "like a bundle of rags," Mrs. May said, but Larry corrected it—"like a bundle of antique brocades." Beads jingled down to her waist, and her arms rattled with strange bracelets. She used perfume, a dry, old smelling perfume like the breath from an Egyptian tomb. Her brown eyes looked from Larry to Mrs. May questioningly.

"My name is Cornelia Harrington," she said in a soft voice. Which is I. May?"

Mrs. May rose.

"I am. Did you come about my house?"

"Yes. I should like to rent it."

Then the stranger smiled very faintly.

"If you think I'll do," she added.

To Larry's amazement, Mrs. May accepted the applicant upon face value, and closed the lease for a year without any delay for references or reflection. When the woman had jingled out, he turned to Mrs. May for explanation.

"Why on earth did you take her like that?"

"I don't know. Why shouldn't I? I liked her. I think she liked me."

"Is that the way women do business?" he asked.

Her bright blue, domineering eyes snapped at him.

"Yes, Boy, they do," she answered. "Besides,———"

"Now here's the real reason."

"I felt that you didn't like her."

VI.

BUT upstairs in her own room she wondered why she had done it. She couldn't account for her impulsiveness. She had accepted the woman just as she had accepted Larry, because she was unable to resist his physical magnetism. This made her very cross with herself. She hadn't even asked the woman if she was married, if she had any children, if she was sober, if she swore. The picture of the neat little housewife in the gingham apron rose to confront her like a pretty, starched ghost. Why had she forgotten? She could never

imagine Mrs. Harrington (or Miss?) in a blue and white checked apron.

On moving-in day Mrs. May and Larry stood, one on etiher side of the terrace, like genial hosts waiting to receive their guests, or like benign angels waiting to receive pilgrims to the gates of Paradise. A station "hack" drove up. Mrs. May grasped Larry's arm and whispered hoarsely,

"Look!"

In the hack were *four* children, a tall gaunt man with a greenish face, his body carefully wrapped in a red and green steamer rug, a large black woman with a yellow bandana and brass earrings, Mrs. Harrington, and, bulging out of spots here and there, canary cages, parrot cages, gold fish bowls, potted plants, canvases, an easel, a typewriter, two dogs, a cat and a violin.

Mrs. May went pale.

"Four children," she burst out.

"And I have no doubt they drink and swear."

"They certainly look it."

And they fled to the dignified halls of Owanoke to allow the confusion to settle itself in its own way.

But, from the very first, nothing went right in The Little House. Mrs. May's dreams were daily profaned. In the first place there were those awful children; and then the furniture didn't suit her.

"Why," she burst out to Larry in high indignation, "they've filled our house with the most awful stuff. She made it herself—out of *packing cases!*"

On one of her early visits she missed "The Duchess of Devonshire" and "The Victory," and found "The Angelus" in the *kitchen*, "because," Mrs. Harrington had explained, "Juna likes it." (Juna was the West Indian cook). This woman caused Mrs. May many a sleepless night. She rarely came home in a sober condition, and her knowledge of English was picturesque and profane. She could be heard on hot nights back in her kitchen juggling the precious blue and white china and singing wild, passionate love songs which made Mrs. May's flesh creep.

Last, but not least, of Mrs. May's annoyances was "The Prince." Who he was, what he was, Mrs. May had never been able to find out. Whenever she passed in her car she could see him sitting out on the pretty terrace Larry had built so nicely, stretched on a steamer chair in the sun. He seldom moved. He sat, withered and sapped, like some splendid, dying tree, his head thrust a little forward, his eyes gazing intently ahead as if trying to pierce through an obscuring veil into some reality beyond.

"Why should they call him 'The Prince?'" she asked Larry one day.

"Do you suppose he really is one?"

Mrs. May had a faint hope that he might be. A prince, even an insane, dying prince, would be something.

"I don't know," came Larry's reply.

He was strangely reticent about the family in The Little House. But he had wondered too. One day he had gone to see Mrs. Harrington and had found her standing behind "the Prince's" chair following his straining, troubled gaze to its obscure goal, and as she had stood there, silent, one hand on his head, Larry had seen the tears press from her eyes, bitter, slow tears overflowing a still, hopeless grief.

"They're queer," was all he had to say to Mrs. May.

"They certainly are," she agreed.

"Do you like her, Larry?" she asked faintly.

"She's interesting."

"Do you *like* her?"

"I don't know."

VII.

LARRY'S week-end visits, necessitated by the house planning, had become now a matter of course. Recently Mrs. May had been hinting at a more permanent stay at Owanoke. In fact, Mrs. May was anxious to make Larry her second husband, and Larry, himself, felt that it could not be avoided.

Under the circumstances it was awkward and painful to have Larry spend most of his time calling on Mrs.

Harrington. But for six months he had seemed unable to resist the fascination of The Little House. Mrs. May waited and watched, and bought herself more elaborate sweaters and more girlish hats.

One September evening Larry called at The Little House in time to see Mrs. Harrington run down the road ahead of him. He ran after her impulsively.

"Go back," she ordered unceremoniously. "I don't want you."

"But you can't go walking about here all alone. The Italians——"

She laughed. She had a strange laugh, not gay or mirthful, but with bitter shadows of gaiety and mirth in it.

"I am not afraid. I have a favorite spot I walk to. Up to the hill over Poplar Plains."

"You're going to walk all the way over there?"

"Yes, I need it. Juna is watching the children. She's not quite sober, I'm afraid, but she's awfully fond of them. They'll be all right."

He felt that she was nervous and worried. He strode along with her, caught up, as ever, in the mystery and power of her, his mind bubbling with questions.

She seemed to feel his curiosity and defended herself against it with a screen of common talk. But, at last, when they came to the slope which faced an amphitheatre of distant hills, she sank down wearily among the cedars and bayberry and gave herself up to an unfortified silence. Larry was excited and glad. Ever since he had known her this had been the hour he had waited for, this silence and the hills and her strange, unguarded mood.

"I want to know all about you," he plunged ahead in his eagerness.

"There is nothing to know, Larry."

"There is everything. I've wondered so much——The violin——?"

"Oh, that was my parents' mistake. They had always been failures, so they wanted me to be something! They started me in early to make sure. I never had the patience for the drudgery. The top cream came too easily, you see."

"The easel—and the canvases——"

"Yes, that too. I was very earnest about that. Such fun! There is so much beauty. I wanted to grab it all forever, but I cared too much to put blinders on and see only my own small square. Artists must do that, you know. You have to be a little blind somewhere to produce a real work of art."

"The typewriter?"

"Give up people, real flesh and blood people for morbid, paper things! I couldn't make the bargain—and you have to. You can't have it all."

"What are you then?" he asked.

"A failure."

"No, because you are beautiful."

"Not even that. I wouldn't compromise even for that. Haven't you seen all the wrinkles?"

"Yes, but they're beautiful."

He saw her slow, patient smile.

Her magic had taken complete possession of him. He sat watching her for a long time, silent and miserably happy. In an impulse which embraced the distant hills, the autumn gold and blue, all magnificent life itself, he drew nearer her and caught hold of her hand.

"Cornelia!" he whispered.

He pronounced her name as he had heard the children pronounce it. He knew now that he had always envied them their life against that breast, within those arms.

She looked upon him in surprise and sympathy, then she laughed and held him in her arms.

Before them the day raced into purples and golds and terrific blues. The pines on the hillside took on great shadows like blots, and unreal painted its own real. They were in that world where all artists live, where Philistines cannot follow, the real world of beauty which cannot be eaten nor drunk, nor bought and sold. Like the heroes in fairy tales, Larry smashed the magic with his own clumsiness.

"Tell me," he insisted, "who is he—the Prince?"

He felt her stiffen and draw away.

"I'm sorry," he blurted out miserably.

"It's all right, Larry. The Prince is a wreck, as you can see, of course. He used to be so splendid, Larry—like you—only finer, bigger. He had great dreams. He was a great painter. I am sure of it. He loved beauty—too well."

"Why too well?"

"He went mad with it. The love of life, and the love of beauty, and the love of women."

"Oh!"

"He always went away—but he always came back. And I was always patient and forgiving. I cared so much, you see—it didn't seem to matter so terribly as long as he was back. Then I lost faith. I shouldn't have done that," she chided herself as if over a fresh wrong.

"Then he came back for the last time. They brought him back as he is now. He didn't know me. He never will—really. He remembers my name—as a name. The only thing I think he really remembers is the perfume I have always used. Sometimes he raises his head and stops as if listening, trying to strain for his memory of me. It—hurts."

"How long has this been?" Larry asked.

"Four years. I gave up my work. I was acting then in a stock company. I've done everything, you see. I'd saved a little money. Then I had the idea about the children . . .

"The idea about the children . . .!"

"Yes. They're not mine. They're orphans. I'm taking care of them. I don't do it very well, do I?"

The whole tangle stretched out before Larry now in its bitter simplicity, but mystery gathered over it thicker than before, like the unknowable gathering now over the familiar hills. He thought of Mrs. May's philanthropy and smiled contemptuously.

"Then the violin and the canvases and the typewriter . . . they were neglected for just people?"

"Yes, Larry, for just people. It was always that way. Nothing systematic about it, nothing really helpful, I suppose. People had a way of appealing to me. First men—that was natural. Then women—that was a revelation. They were always so strong in their friendships. Then—children. They've all stolen the years so quietly that I never noticed. I always intended, you see, to do the big work *some day*. But now that's past."

It had grown quite dark. A slim moon had stolen into the sky. The tree toads had sent the dark ringing. Cornelia jumped to her feet.

"Come, Larry," she said matter-of-factly. "We must go."

She caught his hand and dragged him to his feet and started him unceremoniously on a run down the hill.

Mrs. May in her car met them on the road. She was plainly worried. In the light her motor made she searched their faces and read the truth, and her heart, beneath her silk waist, seemed to shrivel and weaken. She looked old and ridiculous. Larry thought, in her anxiety.

Cornelia invited them to The Little House. She settled them in her most comfortable chairs and made coffee for them in a pewter samovar. It was she who did all the talking. They sat like obedient, frightened children and allowed her to plan the present and future for them. At last she said,

"Mrs. May, I wonder if we could arrange to break the lease. I'd like to move out next week."

Mrs. May accepted the gift stiffly because she was unprepared, and ashamed to show her joy.

"I think it will be all right," she said colorlessly, and rose.

That night Mrs. May had the uncomfortable sensation of leaving her toy house, the house she had planned to govern from the ground up, as a beggar who had come crying for bread, and who had received it at the hands of a kind and noble mistress.

At Owanoke she humbled her pride again.

"Larry," she pleaded, "you won't leave me? You *will* marry me?"

Larry had liked the idea of being comfortable for the rest of his life. He had liked the idea of being adored for the rest of his life. He had grown attached to Owanoke in spite of its bad architecture. Now he knew that he could never be comfortable there. Cornelia had made that impossible. Yet now, for the first time, it was right of him to stay. He saw the irony of his position and was young enough to passionately resent it. Yet Cornelia—Cornelia!

"Larry!" Mrs. May's agonized voice pleaded.

Suddenly, in the extravagant generosity of youth, he put his arm about her and consoled her awkwardly.

"All right," he told her cheerily. "I'm willing."

VIII

THE next week they moved from The Little House, the home-made furniture, the canaries, the gold fish, the dogs and the cat and the children, "The Prince," wrapped in his red steamer rug, Juna in her yellow bandana and earrings, and Cornelia hovering over all in her *capa*.

Larry was there early in the morning to see them off. He caught at Cornelia's hand at the last moment, his eyes hungrily seeking her face.

"Cornelia," he whispered, "is it worth it?"

"Yes, Larry, it is worth it," she told him earnestly. "You'll find out some day. Try to be kind. Try to give her something—something she can't buy."

"The difference between The Little House and the big one?"

"If you like, Larry—yes."

The wagon started. She smiled back at him, patiently, and a little wearily. How young and strong and eager he looked for all his sorrow! How easily he could have changed this utilitarian world of hers! She hid her face in the black, gypsy hair next to her. Anyway, he would never know!

IX

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By G. Vere Tyler

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All was peace. She could do as she pleased, live as she pleased, and be as foolish. *Any* of those things he had so often called her. She could revel in being foolish, and she wouldn't be quarreled with. Nor would *she* nag.

Oh! what a relief not to be nagging, not to be saying sarcastic things pretending they were about what they were discussing when in reality they were about some woman in the back of her head. Every time they had quarreled some woman was in the back of her head urging her on, deviling her on.

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UNDINE OF THE PANS

By Cora Bennett Stephenson

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IT just occurs to me that I never knew her Christian name. When Mrs. Carlyle, in response to my desperate appeal, sent her to me she called her Mamie, and as Mamie only I knew her.

Certain physically beautiful features commended her to my patience at first, I believe. Such masses of brown hair —not golden, but a soft pale brown—I have never seen on a woman before. It draped naturally over her forehead and was piled on exactly the right spot of her crown. Then there were the poise of her head and the perfection of her skin. Indeed, so faultless were her hands and arms, both as to form and color, that I experienced a shudder of dismay when I saw them plunged into a foamy scrubbing pail for the first time. I might have spared myself the tremor, for neither hard labor nor vile soap could harden them.

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She read nothing and never sewed. She ignored the neighbors' maids that hodnobbed at the village stores. Occasionally one "Charley" would inquire for her at my desk telephone. Oftener she answered his call herself from the kitchen and a long conversation carried on in monosyllables for her part, would ensue. Twice during the week I could see a dark blur out on the garden seat beside the pallid glimmer of pink calico, but on these, as on all other nights, she was in her room and the light was out at ten.

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that Mamie was a lump of a girl, stolid and stupid. But as these words struck my ears, I felt an inward protest.

II

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I do remember however that afterward when morning came in the narrow strata of consciousness that lay between smothering mountains of half-sensibility, and a strange woman in a nurse's cap bent over me, I saw Mamie washing somebody's baby out of a porcelain bath standing on the hearth where the sterilizer had been set.

III

A DAY passed and another night before I saw Mamie again. She came in at a time when I was left alone for a few precious moments with the little life for which I had all but given my own. She was dressed to go out and had set her suitcase well inside the door of my room as if she would hide the sight of it from anyone passing through the hall.

"I been here a month," she blurted out before I could put a greeting into words.

"I hope you feel a little at home," I answered inanely, knowing that this was an occasion and that I was not living up to it.

"I'm goin' to quit workin'. I'm goin' to git married," she burst out again, her voice rising and falling with the awkward cadence of a deep emotion that struggled with her surface torpor.

"I'm so glad!" I cried and in my weak state was straightway descending into sentimental tears.

Mamie stepped close to the bedside and one look at the passion battling for expression in her face toned me up instantly.

Seeing I was fit to listen, she went on: "I didn't want to marry Charley. I didn't want to marry nobody. I didn't want to keep no house and clean all the time—jis' fer him." For a moment she was overcome and the rattle and clatter of pans falling in the kitchen came up the back stairs with a distinctness I had never noticed before. She pulled herself together and started out again. "I wouldn't clean and cook all the time fer no man. But I want a baby like yourn. I'd like to have it and hold it and dress it. I wouldn't be thinkin' o' peelin' potato all the time if I had a baby like yourn."

The room had been darkened and I saw her eyes, brilliant now to the point of feverishness, search hungrily among the folds of the ruffled comforter that enveloped my small son. I turned the end back, and, bending from her splendid height, Mamie looked long and lovingly at the little pink velvet face on my arm.

When I knew that my voice would be steady, I spoke to her.

"Does Charley know—how you feel about—this?"

She swallowed with obvious effort. Her voice was husky and her lips, so long immobile, writhed in an uncontrollable grimace that was sublime in its ugliness.

"He don't have to know. He's always beggin' me to marry him, an' now I'm goin' to quit an' goin' to."

She bent again and laid one slender white hand on the crumpled fist of the baby, and after a moment of gazing that saw straight through her tears, picked up the shiny suitcase and crept down the backstairs.

THE STORY ASHLAND TOLD AT DINNER

By Ludwig Lewisohn

NO, the Ashlands haven't entertained formally for years. And they've given up their lodge at Dobbs' Ferry. I saw it the other day; it looked like a blind, deserted thing. They stick to their old house down-town—five stories, you know, stone-front, dwarfed all around by sky-scrapers.

Every now and then I see them in a casual way. She's taken to powdering her hair; you know how easily those brilliant dark women turn grey. But she's still the same—like a japonica in moonlight, I used to say, shining among the dark leaves. He's the same, too—good-looking, golf-playing lawyer, apparently quite impassive and without much subtlety. But that's a mistaken impression produced by his wife's attitude to him. . . .

I can prove that by telling you about a certain dinner—the last they gave at Dobbs' Ferry. You've heard foolish stories, the lurid kind people tell. I happen to have been there. . . .

It was late October and when I think of that afternoon and evening it seems to me that nature's gone off in looks like the rest of us. Leaves! They were bronze and scarlet and gold and a foot deep and in the immense silence you heard nothing but the wind rustling in them. The river curves there and looks like a lake—deep and still and solemn—olive, it seems to me, with bronze flecks and golden pools at sunset. The dining room was in old mahogany (they've left all that fine stuff to moulder out there, too) with the candle flames making amber splotches in it and festoons of Autumn foliage all around.

There were just eight of us, including Bill and Margaret Ashland, and we could all see the river and the still trees through the French windows. It wasn't too cool, but the air had a fine, stringent tang. Everybody felt braced and a little exhilarated, don't you know.

The talk was good at the start. Only there were queer little halts in it—sudden general pauses. And I can tell you why:

We all wanted to ask Ashland, who had been Frye's college chum and later his lawyer and had wound up the estate, why the deuce Tom Frye had put a bullet through his fool head.

There wasn't anybody there who hadn't been glad of the invitation in the hope of light on that subject. It was amusing to see how everybody edged up to the question and then edged away again till finally Stimson—who had also been at college with Frye and Ashland—Stimson, fat, blond, rosy and blatant as ever—called out to Ashland:

"Look here, Bill, you knew all about Tom Frye; he'd hardly talked to *me;* why don't you tell us something?"

I was sitting next to Margaret and she said, "Oh," in a quick, deprecatory sort of way. I nodded my agreement with her. It was coarse and I thought Ashland would turn Stimson down. But he didn't. He seemed to feel that he had shown great perspicacity in this matter, and I think he wanted to convince Margaret of that publicly. You remember how she used to twit him: "Lawyers have no instinct for truth!"

"All right," Ashland said, laying his hands flat on the table before him, "it's really a very curious story. I meant to tell it sometime. I didn't know so

imagine Mrs. Harrington (or Miss?) in a blue and white checked apron.

On moving-in day Mrs. May and Larry stood, one on etiher side of the terrace, like genial hosts waiting to receive their guests, or like benign angels waiting to receive pilgrims to the gates of Paradise. A station "hack" drove up. Mrs. May grasped Larry's arm and whispered hoarsely,

"Look!"

In the hack were *four* children, a tall gaunt man with a greenish face, his body carefully wrapped in a red and green steamer rug, a large black woman with a yellow bandana and brass earrings, Mrs. Harrington, and, bulging out of spots here and there, canary cages, parrot cages, gold fish bowls, potted plants, canvases, an easel, a typewriter, two dogs, a cat and a violin.

Mrs. May went pale.

"Four children," she burst out.

"And I have no doubt they drink and swear."

"They certainly look it."

And they fled to the dignified halls of Owanoke to allow the confusion to settle itself in its own way.

But, from the very first, nothing went right in The Little House. Mrs. May's dreams were daily profaned. In the first place there were those awful children; and then the furniture didn't suit her.

"Why," she burst out to Larry in high indignation, "they've filled our house with the most awful stuff. She made it herself—out of *packing cases!*"

On one of her early visits she missed "The Duchess of Devonshire" and "The Victory," and found "The Angelus" in the *kitchen*, "because," Mrs. Harrington had explained, "Juna likes it." (Juna was the West Indian cook). This woman caused Mrs. May many a sleepless night. She rarely came home in a sober condition, and her knowledge of English was picturesque and profane. She could be heard on hot nights back in her kitchen juggling the precious blue and white china and singing wild, passionate love songs which made Mrs. May's flesh creep.

Last, but not least, of Mrs. May's annoyances was "The Prince." Who he was, what he was, Mrs. May had never been able to find out. Whenever she passed in her car she could see him sitting out on the pretty terrace Larry had built so nicely, stretched on a steamer chair in the sun. He seldom moved. He sat, withered and sapped, like some splendid, dying tree, his head thrust a little forward, his eyes gazing intently ahead as if trying to pierce through an obscuring veil into some reality beyond.

"Why should they call him 'The Prince?'" she asked Larry one day.

"Do you suppose he really is one?"

Mrs. May had a faint hope that he might be. A prince, even an insane, dying prince, would be something.

"I don't know," came Larry's reply.

He was strangely reticent about the family in The Little House. But he had wondered too. One day he had gone to see Mrs. Harrington and had found her standing behind "the Prince's" chair following his straining, troubled gaze to its obscure goal, and as she had stood there, silent, one hand on his head, Larry had seen the tears press from her eyes, bitter, slow tears overflowing a still, hopeless grief.

"They're queer," was all he had to say to Mrs. May.

"They certainly are," she agreed.

"Do you like her, Larry?" she asked faintly.

"She's interesting."

"Do you *like* her?"

"I don't know."

VII.

LARRY's week-end visits, necessitated by the house planning, had become now a matter of course. Recently Mrs. May had been hinting at a more permanent stay at Owanoke. In fact, Mrs. May was anxious to make Larry her second husband, and Larry, himself, felt that it could not be avoided.

Under the circumstances it was awkward and painful to have Larry spend most of his time calling on Mrs.

Harrington. But for six months he had seemed unable to resist the fascination of The Little House. Mrs. May waited and watched, and bought herself more elaborate sweaters and more girlish hats.

One September evening Larry called at The Little House in time to see Mrs. Harrington run down the road ahead of him. He ran after her impulsively.

"Go back," she ordered unceremoniously. "I don't want you."

"But you can't go walking about here all alone. The Italians——"

She laughed. She had a strange laugh, not gay or mirthful, but with bitter shadows of gaiety and mirth in it.

"I am not afraid. I have a favorite spot I walk to. Up to the hill over Poplar Plains."

"You're going to walk all the way over there?"

"Yes, I need it. Juna is watching the children. She's not quite sober, I'm afraid, but she's awfully fond of them. They'll be all right."

He felt that she was nervous and worried. He strode along with her, caught up, as ever, in the mystery and power of her, his mind bubbling with questions.

She seemed to feel his curiosity and defended herself against it with a screen of common talk. But, at last, when they came to the slope which faced an amphitheatre of distant hills, she sank down wearily among the cedars and bayberry and gave herself up to an unfortified silence. Larry was excited and glad. Ever since he had known her this had been the hour he had waited for, this silence and the hills and her strange, unguarded mood.

"I want to know all about you," he plunged ahead in his eagerness.

"There is nothing to know, Larry."

"There is everything. I've wondered so much——The violin——?"

"Oh, that was my parents' mistake. They had always been failures, so they wanted me to be something! They started me in early to make sure. I never had the patience for the drudgery. The top cream came too easily, you see."

"The easel—and the canvases——"

"Yes, that too. I was very earnest about that. Such fun! There is so much beauty. I wanted to grab it all forever, but I cared too much to put blinders on and see only my own small square. Artists must do that, you know. You have to be a little blind somewhere to produce a real work of art."

"The typewriter?"

"Give up people, real flesh and blood people for morbid, paper things! I couldn't make the bargain—and you have to. You can't have it all."

"What are you then?" he asked.

"A failure."

"No, because you are beautiful."

"Not even that. I wouldn't compromise even for that. Haven't you seen all the wrinkles?"

"Yes, but they're beautiful."

He saw her slow, patient smile.

Her magic had taken complete possession of him. He sat watching her for a long time, silent and miserably happy. In an impulse which embraced the distant hills, the autumn gold and blue, all magnificent life itself, he drew nearer her and caught hold of her hand.

"Cornelia!" he whispered.

He pronounced her name as he had heard the children pronounce it. He knew now that he had always envied them their life against that breast, within those arms.

She looked upon him in surprise and sympathy, then she laughed and held him in her arms.

Before them the day raced into purples and golds and terrific blues. The pines on the hillside took on great shadows like blots, and unreal painted its own real. They were in that world where all artists live, where Philistines cannot follow, the real world of beauty which cannot be eaten nor drunk, nor bought and sold. Like the heroes in fairy tales, Larry smashed the magic with his own clumsiness.

"Tell me," he insisted, "who is he—the Prince?"

He felt her stiffen and draw away.

"I'm sorry," he blurted out miserably.

"It's all right, Larry. The Prince is a wreck, as you can see, of course. He used to be so splendid, Larry—like you—only finer, bigger. He had great dreams. He was a great painter. I am sure of it. He loved beauty—too well."

"Why too well?"

"He went mad with it. The love of life, and the love of beauty, and the love of women."

"Oh!"

"He always went away—but he always came back. And I was always patient and forgiving. I cared so much, you see—it didn't seem to matter so terribly as long as he was back. Then I lost faith. I shouldn't have done that," she chided herself as if over a fresh wrong.

"Then he came back for the last time. They brought him back as he is now. He didn't know me. He never will—really. He remembers my name—as a name. The only thing I think he really remembers is the perfume I have always used. Sometimes he raises his head and stops as if listening, trying to strain for his memory of me. It—hurts."

"How long has this been?" Larry asked.

"Four years. I gave up my work. I was acting then in a stock company. I've done everything, you see. I'd saved a little money. Then I had the idea about the children . . .

"The idea about the children . . .!"

"Yes. They're not mine. They're orphans. I'm taking care of them. I don't do it very well, do I?"

The whole tangle stretched out before Larry now in its bitter simplicity, but mystery gathered over it thicker than before, like the unknowable gathering now over the familiar hills. He thought of Mrs. May's philanthropy and smiled contemptuously.

"Then the violin and the canvases and the typewriter . . . they were neglected for just people?"

"Yes, Larry, for just people. It was always that way. Nothing systematic about it, nothing really helpful, I suppose. People had a way of appealing to me. First men—that was natural. Then women—that was a revelation. They were always so strong in their friendships. Then—children. They've all stolen the years so quietly that I never noticed. I always intended, you see, to do the big work *some day*. But now that's past."

It had grown quite dark. A slim moon had stolen into the sky. The tree toads had sent the dark ringing. Cornelia jumped to her feet.

"Come, Larry," she said matter-of-factly. "We must go."

She caught his hand and dragged him to his feet and started him unceremoniously on a run down the hill.

Mrs. May in her car met them on the road. She was plainly worried. In the light her motor made she searched their faces and read the truth, and her heart, beneath her silk waist, seemed to shrivel and weaken. She looked old and ridiculous. Larry thought, in her anxiety.

Cornelia invited them to The Little House. She settled them in her most comfortable chairs and made coffee for them in a pewter samovar. It was she who did all the talking. They sat like obedient, frightened children and allowed her to plan the present and future for them. At last she said,

"Mrs. May, I wonder if we could arrange to break the lease. I'd like to move out next week."

Mrs. May accepted the gift stiffly because she was unprepared, and ashamed to show her joy.

"I think it will be all right," she said colorlessly, and rose.

That night Mrs. May had the uncomfortable sensation of leaving her toy house, the house she had planned to govern from the ground up, as a beggar who had come crying for bread, and who had received it at the hands of a kind and noble mistress.

At Owanoke she humbled her pride again.

"Larry," she pleaded, "you won't leave me? You *will* marry me?"

Larry had liked the idea of being comfortable for the rest of his life. He had liked the idea of being adored for the rest of his life. He had grown attached to Owanoke in spite of its bad architecture. Now he knew that he could never be comfortable there. Cornelia had made that impossible. Yet now, for the first time, it was right of him to stay. He saw the irony of his position and was young enough to passionately resent it. Yet Cornelia—Cornelia!

"Larry!" Mrs. May's agonized voice pleaded.

Suddenly, in the extravagant generosity of youth, he put his arm about her and consoled her awkwardly.

"All right," he told her cheerily. "I'm willing."

VIII

THE next week they moved from The Little House, the home-made furniture, the canaries, the gold fish, the dogs and the cat and the children, "The Prince," wrapped in his red steamer rug, Juna in her yellow bandana and earrings, and Cornelia hovering over all in her *capa*.

Larry was there early in the morning to see them off. He caught at Cornelia's hand at the last moment, his eyes hungrily seeking her face.

"Cornelia," he whispered, "is it worth it?"

"Yes, Larry, it is worth it," she told him earnestly. "You'll find out some day. Try to be kind. Try to give her something—something she can't buy."

"The difference between The Little House and the big one?"

"If you like, Larry—yes."

The wagon started. She smiled back at him, patiently, and a little wearily. How young and strong and eager he looked for all his sorrow! How easily he could have changed this utilitarian world of hers! She hid her face in the black, gypsy hair next to her. Anyway, he would never know!

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I THINK I stood as stolidly, to all appearances, as Mamie usually sat, when I knew that before another day, my child—the first—would be born. I felt a profound hush come over body and soul and could only stand staring, unconcerned over the fact that no nurse was immediately available.

Partially unconscious I was not aware at any time during the long night that followed of the straits to which my household, so depleted of help by a series of accidents, was put. And I did not notice that it was Mamie who went back and forth from the bed to the sterilizer on the hearth with such fleet steps and who followed the doctor's directions with such perfect understanding and instant execution.

I do remember however that afterward when morning came in the narrow strata of consciousness that lay between smothering mountains of half-sensibility, and a strange woman in a nurse's cap bent over me, I saw Mamie washing somebody's baby out of a porcelain bath standing on the hearth where the sterilizer had been set.

III

A DAY passed and another night before I saw Mamie again. She came in at a time when I was left alone for a few precious moments with the little life for which I had all but given my own. She was dressed to go out and had set her suitcase well inside the door of my room as if she would hide the sight of it from anyone passing through the hall.

"I been here a month," she blurted out before I could put a greeting into words.

"I hope you feel a little at home," I answered inanely, knowing that this was an occasion and that I was not living up to it.

"I'm goin' to quit workin'. I'm goin' to git married," she burst out again, her voice rising and falling with the awkward cadence of a deep emotion that struggled with her surface torpor.

"I'm so glad!" I cried and in my weak state was straightway descending into sentimental tears.

Mamie stepped close to the bedside and one look at the passion battling for expression in her face toned me up instantly.

Seeing I was fit to listen, she went on: "I didn't want to marry Charley. I didn't want to marry nobody. I didn't want to keep no house and clean all the time—jis' fer him." For a moment she was overcome and the rattle and clatter of pans falling in the kitchen came up the back stairs with a distinctness I had never noticed before. She pulled herself together and started out again. "I wouldn't clean and cook all the time fer no man. But I want a baby like yourn. I'd like to have it and hold it and dress it. I wouldn't be thinkin' o' peelin' potato all the time if I had a baby like yourn."

The room had been darkened and I saw her eyes, brilliant now to the point of feverishness, search hungrily among the folds of the ruffled comforter that enveloped my small son. I turned the end back, and, bending from her splendid height, Mamie looked long and lovingly at the little pink velvet face on my arm.

When I knew that my voice would be steady, I spoke to her.

"Does Charley know—how you feel about—this?"

She swallowed with obvious effort. Her voice was husky and her lips, so long immobile, writhed in an uncontrollable grimace that was sublime in its ugliness.

"He don't have to know. He's always beggin' me to marry him, an' now I'm goin' to quit an' goin' to."

She bent again and laid one slender white hand on the crumpled fist of the baby, and after a moment of gazing that saw straight through her tears, picked up the shiny suitcase and crept down the backstairs.

THE STORY ASHLAND TOLD AT DINNER

By Ludwig Lewisohn

NO, the Ashlands haven't entertained formally for years. And they've given up their lodge at Dobbs' Ferry. I saw it the other day; it looked like a blind, deserted thing. They stick to their old house down-town—five stories, you know, stone-front, dwarfed all around by sky-scrapers.

Every now and then I see them in a casual way. She's taken to powdering her hair; you know how easily those brilliant dark women turn grey. But she's still the same—like a japonica in moonlight, I used to say, shining among the dark leaves. He's the same, too—good-looking, golf-playing lawyer, apparently quite impassive and without much subtlety. But that's a mistaken impression produced by his wife's attitude to him. . . .

I can prove that by telling you about a certain dinner—the last they gave at Dobbs' Ferry. You've heard foolish stories, the lurid kind people tell. I happen to have been there. . . .

It was late October and when I think of that afternoon and evening it seems to me that nature's gone off in looks like the rest of us. Leaves! They were bronze and scarlet and gold and a foot deep and in the immense silence you heard nothing but the wind rustling in them. The river curves there and looks like a lake—deep and still and solemn—olive, it seems to me, with bronze flecks and golden pools at sunset. The dining room was in old mahogany (they've left all that fine stuff to moulder out there, too) with the candle flames making amber splotches in it and festoons of Autumn foliage all around.

There were just eight of us, including Bill and Margaret Ashland, and we could all see the river and the still trees through the French windows. It wasn't too cool, but the air had a fine, stringent tang. Everybody felt braced and a little exhilarated, don't you know.

The talk was good at the start. Only there were queer little halts in it—sudden general pauses. And I can tell you why:

We all wanted to ask Ashland, who had been Frye's college chum and later his lawyer and had wound up the estate, why the deuce Tom Frye had put a bullet through his fool head.

There wasn't anybody there who hadn't been glad of the invitation in the hope of light on that subject. It was amusing to see how everybody edged up to the question and then edged away again till finally Stimson—who had also been at college with Frye and Ashland—Stimson, fat, blond, rosy and blatant as ever—called out to Ashland:

"Look here, Bill, you knew all about Tom Frye; he'd hardly talked to *me;* why don't you tell us something?"

I was sitting next to Margaret and she said, "Oh," in a quick, deprecatory sort of way. I nodded my agreement with her. It was coarse and I thought Ashland would turn Stimson down. But he didn't. He seemed to feel that he had shown great perspicacity in this matter, and I think he wanted to convince Margaret of that publicly. You remember how she used to twit him: "Lawyers have no instinct for truth!"

"All right," Ashland said, laying his hands flat on the table before him, "it's really a very curious story. I meant to tell it sometime. I didn't know so

very much more than the rest of you when Frye died three months ago. But I've gotten a lot of insight into the situation since—oh, a lot!"

Margaret lifted her fine profile with an incredulous, almost bitter little smile. All her weariness at what she thought his lack of understanding was in that expression.

"How did you?" she asked.

He looked down at his hands.

"Wait and see," he said slowly.

"He's never told you?" I whispered to Margaret.

She merely shook her head gravely and let her husband continue.

"When his wife left him and went to Europe two years and a half ago—"

"We thought the separation did it!" Stimson's fat voice broke in.

"No," Ashland said, "when she left he felt relieved. She's a fascinating creature, as you know, in her slim, golden-blonde way. But she had led him an awful chase. She's the restless, temperamental kind—one scheme today, another tomorrow and at each scheme with a sort of hectic intensity. Always, too, and this is the point, blindly self-centered. She'd either drag everybody along with her or—or die in her tracks. One week she'd keep him out every night till three; next week she'd shut herself up with her writing—she did poetry of a kind—and scream at any interruption. But that was no relief to him. Because when she came out she'd torment him to the quick with her jealousy and make him account for every minute of the time.

"Finally she came to the conclusion—just like a woman, isn't it?—that *he* stifled *her* individuality—and off she went! Frye always was the sensitive, delicately balanced sort, even at college, and her goings on had pretty nearly wrecked his nerves. So when she went he had a chance to recuperate. You've got to remember, of course, that she planned to stay in Paris just six months. He had no anxiety and they corresponded and when she wasn't there to torment him he loved her as much as ever. But the life she'd led him had sunk into him so deeply—had upset him so thoroughly—that he couldn't, just couldn't bring himself to ask her to come back. And, although she was the one who had left, she wouldn't come back without being asked. Again—just like a woman!"

"Quite natural, though," I ventured to put in and again Margaret nodded gravely.

"Maybe so," Ashland went on, "and Frye's morbid conscience made him consider her point of view closely. But he couldn't do it. That's all. His nervous system was to constituted that the very thought of the old life made him tremble—actually tremble and shake. He would test himself and just to imagine his wife at him again made him turn pale."

"He didn't love her!" one of the women threw in sentimentally.

"Yes, he did," Ashland insisted. "He finally, at the end of the first year, stated his case to her rather frankly."

"Did you see his letters?" Margaret asked quickly.

He shook his head.

"No, but her answers. They were in his desk. Immediately after his death I read a good many of them on an impulse. Of course, this needn't go farther." There was a murmur of assent. "The facts are as I have stated them. At that time he dropped hints to me of his situation and the letters confirmed them. A little later he stopped telling me anything, seemed, in fact, rather to avoid me."

He took a sip of wine. No one spoke. We all felt that he was but now coming to the momentous part of his story. When he spoke again we knew that we were right.

"At the beginning of the second year he drew closer to another woman. It's clearly marked in Mrs. Frye's innuendoes and his evident attempts to evade but not deny. At that time, too, he began to jot down notes—you couldn't call it a diary—in a year book."

He paused for a minute. A hush was in the room. The dusk had now floated in and seemed to isolate the

yellow points of the candles and the pale faces and shoulders of the women which rose out of the soft gloom.

"I'm not supposed to be a sentimental person," Ashland said slowly, "and it's true, no doubt. But I think I have hold of the situation that developed in Frye's life. Remember the hectic sort of a chase his wife had led him—clawed at his life and soul continually (that's his own expression) like a bird of prey; kept him in excitement, suspense, terror. . . . The other woman was the kind that gave and—and—sustained, did everything Gertrude Frye could never do. He said the other woman was like a Spring evening—serene and cool and sweet! Evidently she helped him get a grip on himself again and made him happier, because more at one with himself, than he had ever been before. And they didn't have much of a chance, either.

"Everybody, of course, knew Frye to be a married man and expected Gertrude back and, for all we know, the other woman was bound, too. Anyhow he complains that they never had more than two or three hours of each other, that they had to sneak around and hide. What consoled him deeply—especially by contrast—was her punctuality. He made quite a long note on that. Gertrude had always kept him waiting, hanging around, wearing his nerves thin. This woman, with so much more reason and excuse, never did. So their meetings, pitifully few and brief as they seem to have been, never began with a jar. Whenever they met they stepped out of the misery and jangle and ugliness of life into a purer and a finer world."

He paused again and I thought I saw a gleam of moisture in Margaret's eyes. But she couldn't take anything he said at its full value.

"You're getting poetical," she threw out lightly though with a little catch in her voice.

"I'm only reporting, you know," he said with just a touch of irritation.

Then he spoke in a more matter of fact way.

"It's clear enough that he wanted her to go away with him openly and let Gertrude divorce him. But she wouldn't do it. I'm not sure that she had any moral scruples. But, whether from experience or not—maybe just from his—she hadn't any very high opinion of married life. He has a long note on an afternoon they spent walking by the Hudson—an Autumn afternoon too, curiously enough—and he plead with her passionately and even taxed her with not caring for him. But she refused, according to his account, just because she cared so much. She told him that, somehow, marriage developed an evil sense of possession in most women and that then, illogically to be sure, they despised the man for letting himself be possessed and run so completely. She became quite intense and even epigrammatic, according to him, and ended the discussion by saying: 'All marriages are ruined and vulgarized by home-life!'"

II

Ashland looked around and a little hubbub of protest arose and Stimson rather amused us by saying naïvely he hadn't ever noticed it, and Mrs. Stimson said petulantly it was another example of women always slandering their own sex. But Margaret remarked quickly:

"No, it was just saying what everybody knows but is too polite to express."

A discussion threatened to arise, but I urged Ashland to go on.

"You've got to motivate a suicide, you know," I told him. "All this sounds rather—"

He waved his hand. "I'm trying my best to make you see it all as I've come to see it. In spite of the reluctance of the woman to go farther than she had gone, and that was a very little way—those two were happy. Frye wrote it down deliberately, over and over again. He had never, in fact, been happy before. He had lost his mother early and married young. He had been

hustled about and dominated and battered spiritually—as he put it—all his life. This woman, even when they were together, especially when they were together, knew how to put his soul at ease, how to let his own mind expand and his own impulses have free play at last and unchidden. She understood him, she knew what he needed; she never troubled him with her own cares and difficulties but curbed the insistence of her own personality in the service of his. Even more than most American men he hadn't believed such things possible. Oh, our women are devoted nurses in sickness and will stick to you if your troubles are melodramatic. But did you ever see one who, after marriage, subdued herself, didn't, in however high-class a way, nag—but try to give her husband a chance to live his own life? No, let's not discuss it! At all events, Gertrude Frye wasn't that kind and the other woman was. When they separated Frye went home and thought about her and once in a while he would grow quite mystical and call her an Angel with healing on her wings."

A gust of the autumnal air came in and made the candles flicker. No one spoke and we heard the rustle of the leaves outside. The story had gripped us at last and Margaret shaded her eyes with her hand.

"The trouble was, of course," Ashland went on, "that Frye had to correspond with Gertrude. Her letters—I've seen them, as I told you—were like nasty little explosions. She wouldn't come back and she wouldn't leave him alone either. Sometimes she described herself as lonesome and tried to wring him with compassion; sometimes as in a whirl of people and attentions and then she wanted to make him jealous. In every note there was some jar, some stab, some hidden threat, something disturbing and rasping. She kept her notepaper in sachet so long that even from Europe her letters troubled him with the perfume that reminded his senses of her most intimately.

"I don't say she did that intentionally. But the trick was characteristic of all her instincts. However, he got to the point where he could live down each letter in a day or two. Then, as he said, he went back to his Paradise. Both he and the other woman, by the way, deluded themselves more and more as to the precariousness of their situation. In the intervals between letters they forgot about Gertrude—agreed to forget about her. That was the size of it. Of course, he tried to make his angel come to him openly. But on that point the lady's decision seems to have been final.

"Then the crash came suddenly—from their point of view—as it might, of course, have come at any moment. Gertrude got into trouble about money and about a man. She had flirted too outrageously and the man demanded what he had been made to expect. She cabled for funds and then announced her departure for America.

"Frye was shaken by a cold terror: he was wretched in proportion to the happiness he had enjoyed. He saw the old nerve-racking life ahead of him. He committed his first flagrant indiscretion, it seems, by going to the house of the other woman and begging her, piteously, to flee with him. She couldn't bring herself to yield but she half-promised that, if Gertrude could be persuaded to release him, she would try, as she told him, not to desert him."

III

ASHLAND stopped rather suddenly and looked up as though he were aware of something uncanny. Other candles had flickered out and we were almost in darkness. He half rose but I said to him: "Go on!" because I thought that the mood and the scene suited the story.

"Frye went to the pier to meet Gertrude," he continued, "she had half a dozen boxes in addition to her trunks, tried to smuggle through all sorts of stuff, half-fainted in the taxi, recovered suddenly and insisted on luncheon at the Ritz, became every moment more

radiant and domineering and, before they got home, filled Frye with a prostrating sense of the old terrorized whirl. She didn't reproach or question him this time, but acted as if nothing had happened—nothing! Only she kept him busy, attending to her, waiting for her, making love to her, leaving not the loophole of a moment for escape or communication with anyone. He tried to formulate that in his diary and she pounced on that and tried to destroy it. She failed—he caught her just in time—and then it was she who acted the part of supremely injured innocence over the glimpses she had had and immediately grasped the magnificent weapon of what she called his 'outrageous infidelities!' "

"Good Lord," the honest Stimson burst out, "why didn't he run—just run?"

"Because," Ashland said slowly, "he found his condition worse than all his fears. Not only did Gertrude absorb him, but he found the memory of the other woman—that memory which was his dearest possession—slipping irretrievably from his heart and mind: because he discovered that, torment him as Gertrude would, yet—in spite of his irritation and wretchedness and, at moments, flaring hatred—he loved her . . . loved her in the weakness of his subjection and despair and so was doomed to that subjection and despair forever."

Ashland sprang up by some irresistible impulse and I saw Margaret stagger to her feet just as, with a swift gesture, he switched on the electric light. In the full glare they faced each other across the table and he saw the unrestrained tears of an immitigable sorrow in her eyes. I caught at her hot hand in a warning grasp, but already the words were out:

"He didn't love her . . . you don't understand . . ." And her voice had a mournfulness that I shall never forget.

Ashland went white to the very ears, but he played the game. He sat down and I drew Margaret gently back to her seat. Then he swallowed a few times as if he had something furry and bitter in his throat and said:

"You see how the man was tied down. He couldn't get away, he felt degraded and crazy. So he—stepped out."

He gulped down a glass of wine and we all began to jabber—yes, that's the word—just to make a noise, don't you know. And I can't tell you how we ever—it's like the grisliest nightmare—managed to say good-bye to our host and hostess and get out of the house and walk to the station—(we swore we wanted to walk) over all those solemn Autumn leaves. . . .

IV

Oh yes, the Ashlands have lived together right along. Of course, no one knows on just what terms. He hadn't anything vulgar to reproach her with and he's very punctilious by nature. Margaret has never betrayed anything except that, just once, a long while ago, in a discussion that came up she looked at me hard and said that cowardice in the face of life and love was an awful crime, that it killed souls.

And Gertrude—she's now Mrs. McFarland, you know, very rich and fashionable—has been known to complain that, especially in the Autumn season, some impudent person persists in decorating the grave of the late Mr. Frye.

STREET CARS

By John Hamilton

I DETEST street-cars.

* * *

After three cars have passed without stopping you suddenly see a sign you had previously overlooked: "Cars do not stop here."

They let you off in front of mud-puddles when you are about to make an afternoon call.

The conductor threateningly announces that there is room ahead just as you discover a beautiful woman at your elbow.

They stop for your laundryman, who carries on an embarrassing conversation with you about your last week's wash, to the amusement of the passengers.

The motorman refuses to pick you up unless you hail him by an esoteric sign language.

They admit grimy little boys who tread on your clean white spats.

They halt with a jerk that deposits you in the lap of an infuriated spinster, who publicly denounces your clumsiness.

When you are in a hurry they ignore you.

The next car reaches your destination thirty minutes before the taxi you have angrily hailed gets there.

* * *

I detest the blamed things.

NOCTURNE

By Amanda Benjamin Hall

NIGHT writes her message in a million stars,
The day lies dead behind me with its care,
And proud am I to be a child of earth,
And proud to be a daughter to the air!

I would this cosmic rapture might endure:
Too soon life will enclose me like a cell,
And I shall be the slave of little things
Who dared the thought of heaven and of hell.

THE EDUCATION OF PAUL GANT

By Howard Mumford Jones

I

PAUL GANT, Ph.D., instructor in English, closed his rickety desk in the dingy office in Main Hall, took from its top a faded green bag stuffed with Freshman themes for correction, put on his shabby overcoat, and went out of the building into the chilly November rain. The office he shared with four other harassed instructors in English; and if the light was so bad they had to burn electricity most of the day, they were lucky to have office room at all, since Main Hall, old, stately and inconvenient, was overcrowded with the departments it was supposed to house. The five of them, one after the other, had visited the oculist, but the university wants classes taught, it is not interested in oculists.

It can not be said that Gant was extremely cheerful as he pushed home through the rain with his coat collar turned up.

In the first place, his overcoat had already outlasted more November rains than its makers ever intended; and in the second place, the bag, with its stuffing of badly scrawled, carelessly phrased compositions which he was vainly trying to keep dry, was a burden alike to his arm, his brain and his heart. And in the third place, there was the undeniable fact that he and Susan could not live on his salary of $1,200.

Something must be done, or—or—he was not quite sure of the alternative. Finally, he was tired—epically, immorally tired.

Education is a great thing. Especially higher education. The republic is founded on education. Moreover, we believe in lots of education, the higher the better. Every boy and girl is encouraged to go to college and so make the world safe for democracy. This being true, let us consider the case of Paul Gant, Ph.D.

Paul Gant, not yet even B.A., graduated from high school in your town at the head of his class. He was thin, lank, anemic, passionately fond of books. You will recall that you never had much to do with him, but he was always on the debating team, and you told him jocosely "he had swallowed the dictionary." Everybody said it would be a shame if he did not go to college. So he went to college—any college—your college. He spent four years there and was graduated with a B.A. degree. If you will get out your dusty diploma you will see that is the kind of degree you hold. You may remember his name on the Commencement program: "Paul Gant—major subject, English—Honors." You don't remember? Very well. It sounds like bridge but it is not. English is the subject the girls always take because they expect to teach and get married. Paul elected it because he liked to read books.

Now, among the English faculty the professor whom Paul especially admired, became interested in him. That was unfortunate. They talked about books. They would have done better had they talked about plumbing or aviation. The professor, who was a kindly soul, but impractical, told Paul he ought to "continue his studies." And Paul did.

He went to a university noted for the profundity of its scholarship and

the size of its library, and enrolled as a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in English. He borrowed four hundred dollars at four per cent interest to do it. And for a year, in an atmosphere of terrific intellectual pressure, he ground away. He grubbed up the date of Mrs. Browning's birth and discovered it was wrong in most of the text-books, and the relation of Chaucer's final *e's* to their Anglo-Saxon originals, and the indebtedness of *Selimus* (which is a play and not a patent medicine) to the tragedy of *Locrine*. Also he learned an Old English grammar by heart. Here is a sample: "Before *h* plus a consonant, *r* plus a consonant, *l* plus a consonant, and *h* final, *ae* breaks into *ea*, *ei* breaks into *ie*, and long *i*—"

I have forgotten what happens to long *i*. Also I have probably got it wrong. Let us return to Paul Gant.

When he had any time to spare, he did two things. Most of the time he worked on his master's thesis which bore the fascinating title: "The Indebtedness of the Anglo-Saxon Poem of the *Phoenix* to the Latin Poem of Lactantius on the Same Subject." Maybe that wasn't it, but never mind.

And in the rest of his spare time Paul wondered vaguely what all this had to do with reading H. G. Wells and Robert Herrick.

By and by his thesis was "accepted" and he was "examined" by a committee of the graduate faculty. Let us pass over this. Then he stood in line with a herd of other candidates and a gray-haired man in a black gown pronounced a Latin incantation over them, and presto! Paul Gant, B.A., became Paul Gant, M.A. Susan, who had scrimped and saved out of her salary as a high school teacher of French in order to be there, nearly wept when the dean gave Paul his diploma, because she thought that now they could be married. They had been engaged two years. You will have to forgive Susan's unmaidenly boldness. Have you ever taught French in high school?

Paul and Susan were not married that summer. In the first place, there was that four hundred dollars with interest, and in the second place, Paul hadn't his doctor's degree. You have to have a doctor's degree before you can teach about Shelley properly. Paul got him a job in a small college that graciously overlooked his undoctored state in consideration of Paul's receiving $1,000 a year for teaching seventy-five Freshmen how to write their mother tongue. Susan returned to her French classes in high school.

II

At the end of two years Paul had accomplished a miracle. Do not ask me how he did it. Probably it was education. He not only paid off the four hundred dollars with interest, but he had accumulated four hundred and fifty dollars besides. Also he had given his sister (whom he was partially supporting) two Christmas presents; he had given Susan the silk for a waist and the money for a hat; and, on her birthday, he had presented her with a pair of kid gloves.

Then he went to Susan's town. This was extravagance, but then, he had not seen her for a year and a half.

They concluded not to indulge in the riotous luxury of wedded bliss, but to go after the doctor's degree instead. Then Paul's salary would increase and they could be married. So Paul hied him to an older and even more erudite university and Susan sighed and looked into the mirror twice each morning before going to school. The reason was that Paul was now twenty-six and Susan twenty-five. No, that wasn't the reason. Have you ever taught French in a small town high school in the middle west?

Of course I realize that Paul should have waited on table or sold aluminum ware to the farmers' wives. All the successful men do that to go through college. But the doctor wouldn't let him wait on table and the time was too precious to peddle aluminum ware. Likewise, I realize that Paul should

have hunted up another profession. But, unfortunately, he thought he could teach. Also, he was right.

When you are in Paul's position, it takes two years—sometimes three, four or five years—to obtain a doctor's degree. They give it to you when they judge you are ready for it, not before. Among other things you have to prepare a suitable thesis—"an original contribution to knowledge" in your "field." You must hunt up somebody sufficiently dead and prove something about him, and the older and deader and more difficult your subject is, the higher your thesis ranks as a contribution to knowledge. Paul liked to write little, graceful essays (he did them rather well), but an original contribution to literature won't do. He gave up reading Arnold Bennett and Galsworthy and other unprofitable authors —what he wanted was a job—and made a study of the prepositions in Anglo-Saxon.

At the end of a year he had done very well. He had a drawer and a half full of Anglo-Saxon prepositions and their Middle English equivalents, all arranged on cards, and he had accumulated a fund of information about authors and books and dates and editions and sources that would have dazzled his audience, if he had had one. Also he had a cough.

At the end of three months spent in the summer session, he found one day in the university library a newly received pamphlet by a German student in a university Paul had never heard of, setting forth the doctrine of the Anglo-Saxon preposition completely and exhaustively. Four days later Susan received a letter from the Belleview Hospital, in consequence of which she drew her savings from the bank and travelled night and day to reach Paul before he died. But he didn't die.

III

PERHAPS, however, you are losing interest in this sort of thing. Let us skip a year.

Paul was now twenty-eight and Susan was twenty-seven. In the interval Paul had more or less recovered his health—less rather than more—and he had conceived a brand-new subject for his thesis: A New Theory Concerning the Latin Works of Walter Mapes. You are still losing interest? So was Paul.

At the end of another eighteen months, Paul sat in a somber recitation hall, looking like a tired and timid victim of the Inquisition facing his judges. Around him and above him, in the tiers of seats, sat the members of the faculty of arts, or such numbers of them as cared to attend the torture. And they asked him questions. They asked him about Milton's theory of church government and about Gottfried von Strassburg and the plays of Hrothswita and Swinburne's religion and the inner meaning of Blake and Orm's *Ormulum* and the probable dates of Marie de France and Byron's relations to three different women and Shakespeare's grammar. And when Paul could, he answered them in a tired, spiritless voice (he had been preparing himself three weeks for the ordeal, using the *Cambridge History of English Literature* in fourteen volumes and quarts of black coffee by way of stimulants); and when he could not answer, he looked at them vaguely and murmured apologetically. Also he wondered whether they were ever going to stop and whether the room was really circular or was it Browning's dates that made it go round.

At length the chief inquisitor relented and the rest said they were satisfied, and Paul promptly fainted. Three weeks later, Paul Gant, M.A., became Paul Gant, Ph.D. And then he and Susan were married.

It is not our business to inquire into the next three weeks. At the end of that time Paul permitted himself an inventory of the situation. He had a debt of $635 with interest at five per cent to pay off; he was required to publish his thesis—it would cost him $150 or $200; and he had discovered

that Susan was a dear and wonderful wife, but that two could not live as inexpensively as one.

To offset this side of the ledger, however, he had a position as instructor in English at a university. Let us call it your university. No? Then we will call it a State University. This position paid him $1,200 a year; and as you will see, this was $200 a year more than he had received from his teaching some years before. The difference was, no doubt, attributable to his doctor's degre. The faculty in English numbered sixteen; and in the course of twenty years, if enough older members died or quit or went elsewhere, Paul might hope to become a full professor at the opulent salary of $3,000 a year. This is about the wages of a master plumber.

The Allies were hanging on at Ypres and other unpronounceable names that year. Paul remembered vaguely something about an Austrian archduke, but as he had been reading mediæval Latin all year, you will have to forgive his lack of interest. He did not put the Allies in his inventory at all. That was a mistake.

Susan mothered him a good deal that summer. Paul's nerves were raspy, but he rather liked being fed egg-nogs and hearing Susan read from the works of Mr. Robert W. Chambers. If he had looked at himself with Susan's eyes, he would have seen a pallid, emaciated, "gangly" man with weak eyes and constantly twitching muscles. Or, no—he would not have seen that with Susan's eyes. But if he had looked at Susan with your eyes, dear reader, he would have seen that, though she was only twenty-nine, she looked thirty-five. Fortunately, he did not have your eyes.

IV

PAUL was not thinking about his past as he plodded home; he was wondering, instead, about his future. He went over and over what the president of the university, a kindly, brusque, successful man of fifty, had told him in yesterday's interview, when, with the permission of the head of his department, Paul had requested an increase in salary. Gant had been awkward and embarrassed, and the president felt sorry for him.

"It's no use, Dr. Gant," he had said. "This is a war year. You can't get money out of the legislature for anything that does not directly and obviously pertain to the war."

"I've been here two years," timidly expostulated Paul.

"We're very well satisfied," hurriedly returned the president. "And your salary ought to be raised. But, Gant, the appropriations for the college of liberal arts have been cut down $24,000. I'm sorry for you. I'm sorry for anybody who has to struggle along on an income that was already meager in 1914. But I'm helpless — absolutely helpless."

The door of the office had opened at this point and the president's secretary put in his head.

"Major Dennis is here," he said, "about the training corps."

It was evident even to Paul that the president was much more interested in the training corps than he was in Gant's salary. Don't blame the president. The training corps would bring an additional 400 students to the university. Paul picked up his hat, he remembered, and the president had made a vague noise in his throat intended to indicate sympathy. Then Gant had left—awkwardly, of course. He had not told Susan about his interview yet; perhaps that was why he kept reviewing the scene as he went home, trying to find some loophole, some unturned stone. But he could not. He would tell Susan tonight. Together, maybe, they could figure out something.

Paul was now near home. It was the same apartment house in which Dr. and Mrs. Paul Gant had been at home after September first, some months before. Before he reaches the doorway, let us indulge in a little figuring.

For the sum of $30 a month the

Gants were permitted to occupy a large room with a bed that slid under the china-closet; a bath room containing a tub in which no one but an infant could bathe; a kitchenette intended for persons with Lilliputian appetites; a dressing room six feet by eight; and two closets. Paul paid the electric light and the gas bills, but the heat, hot and cold water, and a gas range were miraculously furnished.

Paul likewise rented one-thirtieth of a janitor—when he could be found. You will readily see that this arrangement left them $65 a month to squander, but as Paul insisted on putting aside $10 a month to accumulate against his debts, the Gants were left $55 a month with which to buy furniture, dishes, clothes, food, light, books, entertainment, and vacations. Paul had reduced his debt to about $360, but his thesis—alas!—had not yet been printed. He would have made a brilliant financier.

Paul looked up through the rain at the window on the top floor where Susan usually sat waiting. Tonight Susan was not there. Perhaps she had not returned from the Red Cross rooms. Paul felt illogically resentful—he wanted Susan. When he had fitted his key to the lock, he paused and looked absently around him. It was not a nice neighborhood, but Paul had got used to that—except when some club woman asked Susan why they lived way off *there*. Then Paul was willing to murder almost anybody.

He stumbled toward the electric-light button when he had entered his apartment. Something was wrong with the room. Was it—oh, the bed had been pulled out into the center of the floor. What was the matter? When Paul had turned the switch, he dropped his bag of themes on the floor where they fell with a dull, mushy sound. Susan was lying, fully dressed, on the bed.

She sat up. She looked at Paul. Paul had never seen her like that before. It was not that she had been crying, it was the hunted look in her eyes. He sat down on the bed beside her. She snuggled up to his wet overcoat.

"It's so co-old and dreary," she moaned.

"I'll telephone for some heat," said Paul courageously, starting to get up.

"You can't," said Susan without interest. "The janitor got drunk and Mr. Whelpley discharged him, and he's still looking for somebody."

In summoning up his courage, Paul forgot about his interview with the president.

"You're tired, sweetheart," he said. "I'll start supper."

Susan let him get up. When she heard him clattering away in the kitchen, she tidied the bed and pushed it back into the gaping recess in the wall. That made it possible to reach the china closet. Then she brought forward the dining-room table and spread a cloth on it—one of three. She then proceeded slowly to set the table. When she had denuded a shelf in the china-closet, she paused and, leaning against the table, drew her hand, palm outward, across her forehead. She was a slender, palely attractive woman, still bearing the marks of her former occupation in the form of two deep lines between her eyebrows, a habit of nervously tapping the floor with her foot, and permanently impaired eyesight.

"Paul," she said in a low voice. She was not tapping her foot now.

At the sound Gant hastily dropped a pan on the kitchen stove and entered the room. What was the matter? Susan stood with both hands flat on the table, her body slightly inclined toward him so that the electric light clung to her brown hair. Her face looked tired, and in her eyes was still that dumb look of suffering.

"What is it, Sue?" he cried sharply.

"I—I didn't go to the Red Cross this afternoon," began his wife, hiding her face. "I went to the doctor's."

Paul took a step toward her. Into his eyes came a look of stupefaction!

That was replaced by troubled understanding.

"*Not—?*" he queried elliptically.

"Yes, Paul."

The Gants, husband and wife, stared at each other across the cheap table. The light made little pools of yellow on the dishes and shone dully from the buttons on Paul's vest.

Of course I know that the proper thing for Mrs. Gant to have done was to hold up for Paul's beatified admiration a dear, little garment. That is how they do it in the movies. People in the movies, however, do not have to live on $55 a month.

V

A LONG moment went over them. Something was burning on the gas range, but neither was conscious of it. Susan still kept her head down, but now she was playing aimlessly with a knife and a fork. Paul stared at her as if he was never going to see her again. He could hear his watch ticking in his pocket.

"Now, what are we going to do?" he asked dully.

"I don't know, Paul," said Susan, raising her eyes. Then she added irrelevantly. "Bread has gone up to fifteen cents a loaf."

The Allies, being determined to figure in Paul's ledger, had chosen this underhanded method.

"I—I saw the president today," ventured Paul, still staring at his wife with fascinated eyes. "The appropriation for liberal arts has been cut down. And the faculty is going to be reduced. I'm safe, I guess."

"Oh Paul, dear!" cried Susan.

She looked at him. Then she shuddered a little.

"I'm cold," she whimpered, groping her way around the table.

Paul put his arms around her and kissed her.

"There, there, sweetheart," he said, and tried to comfort her. It was not a very convincing job. Then he put a shabby coat around her, hauled out the bed half way, made her lie down, and went to do salvage work in the kitchen. On the way he stumbled over his bag of themes. It can not be said that these products of education received the consideration recommended by the books of pedagogy. The fact is, Paul kicked them vigorously against the side of the room. Susan giggled hysterically.

The fried potatoes were a hopeless mess, and the stewed corn no longer recognizable. This did not add to Dr. Gant's optimism. As he cleaned up the stove and began ruefully to prepare another supper, he reflected on his situation, bitterly and without illusion.

His mind went back, for one thing, to the classes he had taught that day; two sections of hopelessly mediocre Freshmen into whose uninterested perceptions he was supposed to pound the fear of comma blunders and respect for the England language. It was incredible that the human intellect could so withstand instruction. A month and a half had gone by, and yet his students, despite the incessant repetitions of the class room, despite patient and continued individual "conferences," despite the simple instructions of the manual of compositions each one possessed, doggedly continued writing sentences without verbs, coupling plural subjects and singular predicates, mistaking adjectives for adverbs, and generally failing to indicate that any progress had been made in them since they left the eighth grade.

Do not be unfair to Paul. His classes were quite as good as the average, and the high schools say they are not to blame. Only, he was grinding out the best years of his life in a wearying battle against stupidity, and even the gods. But the proverb was made in Germany.

Paul reflected on the situation. In fact, his mind went into a committee of the whole on the state of this particular union. And the more he thought, the madder he got. His training and his inclinations were more or less liter-

ary: he could write a little; and yet he was set to work, day in and day out, to explain that a verb is conjugated and should never be declined.

He thought about Susan and the long wait to be married; he thought about his studies in the graduate schools; he thought about the way Susan had scrimped and saved; he thought how they had wanted children and had denied themselves for the sake of publishing Paul's thesis; he thought how they could not support the one that was now coming. In fact, he thought so much that he was in danger of burning the potatoes a second time, when Susan's voice recalled him to his surroundings.

"I'm so cold," she whimpered, "I'm freezing."

Paul turned off the gas under the frying pan.

"Where are you going?" asked Susan in alarm.

"I am going," said Paul distinctly from the hall door, "to the furnace room. And I am going to build a fire and get some heat into this damned apartment."

As swearing it was not much, but then, instructors do not have much practice in profanity.

Paul did not build the fire. When he reached the basement, he found Mr. Whelpley, fat, red and perspiring, his head thrust into the maw of the furnace, his voice booming in a series of smothered explosions that should have successfully heated his tenants. But they did not, for on the wall behind him hung the shattered house telephone. He emerged from the furnace and glared at Paul.

"Where's the kindling?" he roared.

"Right over here," said Paul promptly. "And the fine coal is over there."

"Do you know anything about this furnace?" demanded Dr. Gant's landlord, smearing his wet face with black as he brushed back his abundant hair.

"I do," said Paul.

Ordinarily he was timid, but he was still thinking about Freshman composition. "You pull out this damper first."

Together they built the fire. Once the telephone jarred faintly, but Mr. Whelpley might have the scriptural idol for all that his ears could hear.

When the furnace had commenced a comfortable purring, Paul turned. It was one of the great moments of his life.

"The janitor is discharged?" he asked crisply. The president of the university would not have known him.

"He is," responded Mr. Whelpley, "good and discharged."

"How much did you pay him?" asked Paul.

"I paid him," said Mr. Whelpley with growing heat, "one hundred and fifty dollars a month. And I gave him an apartment to live in. I paid him that much because I wanted to keep him. All he had to do was to keep this place clean and warm, and now—"

"Are you thinking of hiring another janitor?" interrupted Paul.

"I am," answered Mr. Whelpley, "if I can find one. Otherwise—"

"Would you hire me?" said Paul.

Let us not dwell on the astonishment of Mr. Whelpley. Also the ensuing conversation between Dr. Gant and his landlord is lost to history.

A half an hour later Dr. Paul Gant stood rummaging through his desk, one foot unconsciously planted on the bag of Freshman themes.

"What have you got?" asked Susan, drowsily comfortable with a good supper and plenty of heat.

"I have here," said Paul in his best class-room manner, coming toward her with a handful of papers, "a diploma certifying that I am a Bachelor of Arts. Here is another certifying that I am a Master of Arts. Don't try to read it—it's Latin. And I have here a third document stating that I am a Doctor of Philosophy and may enjoy all the rights and perquisites of that degree. This," he continued, holding forth a smaller paper, "is my appointment as an instructor in English at

$100 a month. This," he said triumphantly, drawing a fifth document from his pocket, "is my contract as the janitor of this apartment house at $165 a month. I am now going down cellar to start the fire under the water-heater which has not been in operation all day."

"But—" ejaculated the wide-eyed Susan.

"These?" said Paul, following and interpreting her gaze. "These are to start the fire with, under the water-heater."

And he went out with his diplomas in his hand and shut the door.

THE GREAT CALAMITY

By Max Saher

A GREAT calamity had overtaken the city. Laughter was heard no more. Conversations were held in low tones, as people converse at funerals. There were no smiles on the lips of men, no roguish glances in their eyes. One man attempted an old-time joke that never failed to bring a laugh; it fell flat. All wore perturbed or anxious countenances. Husbands were gruff and unresponsive to their wives. Restaurants that used to echo gayety resembled tombs. A great calamity had overtaken the city.... It had gone dry.

PRESENTIMENT

By May Greenwood

THIS gentle stream shall turn no wheels of Pain,
But hidden in the Hills of Dream, half-heard
Shall echo, like the rapture of a bird,
O'er meadows silver after nights of rain.

Its beauty is a chime that shakes the heart,
As choral stars, enamoured of the night,
Vibrantly sweet and passionately white—
A thing from dust and discord held apart.

It shall not traffic where the rivers lie,
But pause to cool a hillside's breast at eve,
Or kiss a trembling fern that seems to grieve,
Or drown a poppy's gold when it must die.

Lost fauns shall rest beside its purities;
Its heart shall hold the beauty of the skies
And feel the breath of life, as from our eyes
Remembered jewels fall, of unknown seas.

THE MAN WITH THE DROLL JEALOUSY

By L. M. Hussey

THAT tragic denouement to the love affair of Jackson Bender presented itself to everyone of his acquaintances as an event utterly without explanation, for they could not in any way sense the connection.

Even to his most immediate friends the affair called for nothing save gravity and a bewildered shake of the head whereas, had the facts been out and properly presented, not a few might have afforded a smile at their wholesome jocosity. Not a person suspected that if one desired the complete history—all the facts that led up to Jackson's act—the first chapter would concern itself with the day he met Grace Bowen at the Social Purity League.

It was the occasion of the now celebrated debate on Working-girls' Wages, the proposition of the affirmative being: "Resolved, that a working-girl can support herself, virtuously, in a large city on seven dollars a week." The conclusions reached at that debate have now been immortalized in the Society's tract upon the subject which has unquestionably come as balm and blessing to the tract-reading hours of uncounted American working-girls.

At the time it was argued, the debate attracted all the attention it very properly deserved and the lecture room of the Purity League found the regular members outnumbered by the visitors two to one. Jackson, as one of the judges of the debate, discovered himself an individual of some conspicuousness and was introduced to a number of the guests by various friends of his.

In this manner someone happened to present Grace Bowen, although afterward he could not recollect just who was responsible for the introduction. He remembered, however, that he took her hand rather in a flurry and excused himself almost immediately, for it was already time that he take his place among the other judges.

Seated presently at the long table facing the attentive audience, with the debate in progress, he had a plentiful opportunity to look about him and more than once he rested his eyes on Grace's frequently bowed head. She appeared to be taking some sort of notes and the very natural thought occurred to Jackson that she must be an amateur sociologist interested in the righteous cause of Social Purity.

It was a very charming little supposition for him and he dallied with it perhaps more extensively than strict attention to his judicial duties should have permitted.

He was, frankly, particularly pleased with the physical aspect of this woman and in consequence it gave him a gentle delight to portray her interested in the uplifting work which claimed his fascination, for this meant a desiderate bond of sympathy between them.

The other women Jackson knew, who could strike the eye with charm, had none of his enthusiasms and he had yearned, even a trifle immoderately, for the oasis of female sympathy. On several previous occasions he had been deceived by mirages but in this instance

he began more and more to feel that his eyes were resting themselves upon the real thing.

It was doubtless the truth that Jackson had an active and quite sufficient imaginative faculty, but it must not be supposed that his developing conception of Grace was nothing more materialistic than the roseate figments of his fancy. He had, to be precise, some definite encouragement from the lady herself. The business of jotting notes did not claim her to the exclusion of every other interest and more than once she let her observing eyes meet Jackson's. On these occasions she would smile faintly and sympathetically—unmistakably with sympathy.

Before the debate had closed and the judges delivered their findings, Jackson decided that their silent communications across the room had established their conformity of temperaments at a degree to which a considerable extent of spoken dialogue would not ordinarily have brought them.

In the bustle after the close of the debate she waited for him. He thought this fine of her and told her so, because in his official capacity he could not get away nearly as promptly as his desire urged.

"I think it was awfully good of you to stay," he said to her.

"Oh," she said, "I just felt that we wanted to talk to each other. It's so seldom one meets a kindred spirit."

"Isn't it? I simply *knew* when I looked at you during the debate that you could understand my feelings."

"Those people in there are such sheep!"

He acquiesced with eagerness.

"Exactly; too often I am afraid they don't really grasp the significance of the things that are discussed."

They walked slowly down the corridor to the large marble flight of stairs.

"I'm sure," she asserted, "that you'll understand me when I tell you that I saw right away how different you were from those stupid other judges at the table."

Jackson emitted a little depreciatory noise.

"You know it's true," she insisted. "Any one could see that they took the whole thing so seriously. They actually thought there was some usefulness in what they were doing. And the debaters! But I saw right away that you were a member of the society for the same reason I was a visitor—you wanted to gather material to expose their silliness. I've got some perfectly blistering notes! I'm right, am I not? . . ."

"Certainly."

Jackson said this word and by it irrevocably placed himself, in Grace's estimation, on her side and a party to her perfectly shocking beliefs. While it was forming on his lips he saw his position and his relation to this woman in a swift vision. They were at the north and south poles of thought, the antipodes of faiths. In a few brief sentences she had odiously revealed herself and shown herself no less than himself the entertainer of a stunning misconception. She thought him one of her sardonic stripe, a scoffer and a satirist. She visioned him a member of the Purity League that he might gather mirth from it and go out and write heretical books about it and about the inspired tracts which it caused to be printed. But the most hideous phase of the whole bewildering matter was that he had denied his ideals and had done so because he was attracted by this lovely, ideal-abandoned creature.

II

JACKSON turned and turned these thoughts after he had left her (although with an engagement for the following day) and perceived himself an unhallowed Judas to the Uplift.

As he passed a bevy of working-girls on the street and thought of the earnest work the society had been doing for them that day, he wondered how a being like Grace could endure living without Faith in Man and other ennobling things. But these thoughts did not

bring him the saccharine delight in conscious virtue which they had brought him in the past. His governing power of intellectual sequences would constantly connect them with the bitter recollection of his false acquiescence. Yet he could not by any means induce himself to recant or to admit that under the same circumstances he would not repeat his action *precisely*.

This result from the sudden potency of her charm manifested itself in a far more extensive degree when he lunched with her the next day.

They fell into a discussion of two other societies in which Jackson held membership, the Total Abstinence Union and the Workingman's Uplift Alliance—and, as he sipped a vintage from the grapes of France, he discovered himself glib tongued in ironic comment on these institutions.

"When you come to see me," she remarked, "I shall let you look over some of the material I have gathered for my book. I have some stuff that will tickle you."

"It must be soon. I know you must really have some very clever matter."

"Wouldn't it be lovely if we could collaborate? We both think so much the same way. . . ."

"We must; we simply must. I was stupid not to think of it."

He talked to her heresies upon heresies, realizing in a confused manner that he had stumbled into a perfectly mad love affair. He was, he admitted, *quite* in love with her. His mind never failed in self-reproaches, yet it none the less found space for panegyrics on her hair and eyes and hands and mouth. He wanted to kiss her and make love to her and say sweet words to her. At the same time among his mental disorders he was conscious of a singular impression of discontent which in some vague way seemed connected with the conscience-pricks at his heresies, but still not exactly that. From time to time this uneasy and undefinable something would return and verge almost to the point of luminosity and definition, only to retire again beyond any mental effort at illumination.

Apparently related in some way, it seemed, to this bizarre evanescence was Jackson's sense of shocking one particular of his oldest ideals. He very presently discovered that Grace took the greatest delight in him when he was most effective in his gibes and sarcasms at the numerous organizations of moral elevation which they discussed.

By the time he made his initial visit to her home, he had progressed to the open mental admission that he entertained the most desperate and insistent passion for Grace and must ply every oar for advantage that opportunity offered him. Consequently he became quite amusingly epigrammatic on the Purity League and the Abstinence Union and similar blessings of a sinful humanity, observing the rising admiration for him that was visible in his beloved's manner. This, however, rasped further his already sand-papered soul, because it violated a traditional ideal which he had held for many, many years.

III

JACKSON had many years before formed the concept of the sort of lover he could be. He had thrown his notions into the condensed form of several mental pictures in which he visioned himself walking gravely beside the woman of his fancy, discussing the nobility of man and the few obstructing barriers which a little organized effort might very readily reduce to nothingness. With an incompatible perversity, his imagination persisted in regarding this fancy as the way he ultimately *would* make love, even at the moment when in his talk to Grace he offered the most strenuous violations.

It is asserted by the initiated that all sincere love-making involves a large portion of distraction, yet there is considerable doubt whether the ordinary occasions of amative distemper offer any parallel to the extensively confused condition of Jackson's mind. He found

himself more and more obsessed with that extraordinarily disquieting and recurrent flood of singular and undefinable malaise. Upon each occasion of its reappearance he would strain to retain and define his feelings. These severe mental efforts at analysis served him nothing and it was actually by a quite trivial accident that he discovered the precise meaning of his sensations.

Grace had said, indicating a stranger, "That man strides his horse nicely," and immediately he knew. It occurred during a walk taken a trifle early in the morning and Grace, because she was warm and somewhat uncomfortable from having slept poorly the previous night, had been almost splenetic in her conversation. Their talk touched mostly upon the growing crowds of people passing with whom Grace on the particular occasion appeared to have but slight patience.

"It's the same old mob," she said. "They stood around and stared when Diogenes talked to them and they're still at it. Sheep . . . cows. . . ."

"Still, there's been a *little* progress," offered Jackson, very tentatively.

"Nothing of the kind! They're just the same. The Overmen have given them slightly cleaner houses to live in, that's all. But they didn't *want* them. You have to take 'em by the ears and make them be clean. . . ." And then she looked up and espying the equestrian remarked: "That man strides his horse nicely, doesn't he?"

Jackson followed the slight inclination she gave with her hand and observed the rider.

Almost instantly a little dart of jealousy clouded his mind. Then there followed a moment of intense familiarity. He felt that he had constantly been jealous of that man for several weeks. The impossibility of this puzzled him—it might have been a full second—for he had never seen the horseman before in his life.

Then, as if a swift panorama were unrolling for him a vital series of progressive pictures, he perceived that indeed he *had* been jealous for several weeks but not of the man riding the horse. All his uneasy, disquieting hypochondria he now saw had been simply the manifestation of jealousy.

Between this realization and the final illumination of his quandary, Jackson experienced a perceptible mental pause. He even talked in the interval to Grace. Having sat up late the night before in order to complete a paper he intended to present before the Association for the Extermination of National Vice, he quoted satirically from this document and Grace beamed on him with encouragement.

Instantly he received his final enlightenment. He was murderously jealous of—*himself!*

What seemed to him to be his *veritable* personality was disembodied and observant from some distant vantage point, perhaps across the street. This incorporeal Jackson observed the carnal Jackson with eyes that glowed green. The unsubstantial Jackson hated the creature wearing clothes and walking with Grace, with concentrated maliciousness. Had he had hands, he would have gripped his throat and throttled him until he was purple in the gutter.

In the beginning he did not understand why this saturnine passion of a blazing jealousy should have divided one part of himself against the other. The jealous Jackson possessed a certain degree of intellectual detachment and he very earnestly set to the task of studying just the particular qualities which roused in him his fierce spirit of apprehension and revenge. He watched Jackson the rival bend down to Grace and talk with his face close to hers and he would feel himself aflame and consumed with wrath when she smiled lingeringly, or laughed at the words he said.

Even her smiles and laugh did not offer the immediate clew they might have. They gave a sufficient caloric enlargement to the blistering flames, but no elucidations. Like the other points in his enlightenment, this one occurred on an instant and without any apparent reason.

The jealous Jackson, moodily observing his detestable antagonist, was suddenly aware that this Jackson goaded him almost to teeth-gnashing because he won the coveted smiles of Grace through a system of hateful and lying schisms. Jackson, the jealous, was the grave-spoken lover who had dreamed of ennobling discourse and disquisitions on the innate Sublimity of Man. With a wormwood virility he hated this interloping scoffer who could so hopelessly outdistance his uplift rival.

Jackson was not without a perception of the humorous. He understood, when the first peculiar intensity of his initial realization had worn off, that there was a diabolic drollery in this condition of auto-jealousy. None the less, he *was* jealous. It assailed him at night, when he would awaken out of nightmarish slumbers. He thought always how much more worthy the person whom he called the real Jackson was of the favors spent upon the other. He could not be free of his passion even when he walked upon the streets or sat at his meals or attempted to beguile himself with the pages of books. It was particularly aggravated when he was in the company of Grace, and yet above all things he desired to be in the company of Grace.

Jackson, after more than a week of this vast distraction, saw very clearly that he must rid himself quickly of the passionate demon astride his shoulders. Thinking carefully upon the matter he perceived just two ways to shake off his old-man-of-the-sea. The one was to give up Grace. Literally this; never to see her again and then he knew his jealousy would fade and leave him untroubled and normal again. But this course was unthinkable. He could not give up Grace. He was madly enamoured of her. He loved the glints in her eyes and the sweetness of her lips—it was simply preposterous to suppose that he could give up Grace.

So Jackson very diberately chose the only remaining alternative. This was to put the hateful rival Jackson out of existence.

On this account he purchased a forty-five calibre automatic pistol and with it drilled a round hole at the base of his occipital bone, causing the instant demise of the anti-uplift Jackson.

It may, of course, be argued that this treatment was too harsh on the other Jackson—the jealous, uplift fellow. It was this point that Jackson neglected to consider. But it is to be noted that the achievement of perfection in the plans of this grotesque business of living is not in the destiny of most of us.

NATURE is very kind to women. If they lack fine teeth they can always smile with their eyes.

IN the duel of sex, woman fights from a dreadnaught and man from an open raft.

WE admire the man who listens to reason because he gives us a chance to talk.

TO C. G. G.

By Laura Kent Mason

YOU do not interpret my moods correctly. Tuesday evening I was full of the spirit of Youth, of Romance. I had put on my oddest frock, with straight, clinging lines. I've gained eight pounds but that frock makes me look slender. I stood posed against the black velour hangings. You said:

"This is nice and cumfy. You're looking so much healthier and fatter than you used to. Come and sit down here in this big chair. I want to read you some things out of a new book I got at Brentano's this afternoon."

You do not enter into Living with me. I want to meet interesting people, have unique adventures. Wednesday I asked you to take me to a restaurant I had heard about, where people who Do Things go. At the next table sat a man with piercing eyes who talked about the Right To Live. I could not eat for listening. I smiled at him. You said:

"I see you are laughing at that fellow. I don't blame you. He used to be a waiter at my club. The service here is impossible. You're quite right about not eating. Let's go farther up town and get something decent."

You do not understand me. Yesterday when we were alone I half closed my eyes and looked at you through my lashes. I hadn't had much luncheon but I wouldn't have had you know that I was hungry. I tried to look mystic, aloof, alluring. You just glanced at me and said:

"Hurry into your wraps and we'll go over to the Plaza for tea."

THE MODEL

By Harry Kemp

WHY should I sing my songs to you,
You who are vain as you are fair,—
Dragging in all the similes
That haunt the ocean, earth, and air!

You neither care nor understand:
And yet in vain I do not sing:
For him who writes, as well as paints,
A model is a needful thing;

So loose your hair, adjust your pose,
Assume the look that seems most true,
And keep your heart for someone else—
We'll fool the world between us two!

HERE'S TO THE DEAD!

By William Drayham

I

FANCHON was dead. Impossible fact! She lay in her home surrounded by people who walked on tip-toe, who wore an air of lugubrious importance. Welling had come away laughing silently at these people. There was a waggish solemnity about them, an owlish pompousness which made for laughter. They came and went, in and out of rooms, opening doors, nodding mysteriously to one another, saying "Shh" and biting their lips. What was it they were trying to convey by their clownish grimaces? What inspired these gestures of ludicrous gravity? Ah, to be sure, the fact that Fanchon was dead. This crowd of pussyfooting imbeciles were the mourners for Fanchon—strange, gawky aunts, violently mustachioed uncles, cadaverous cousins.

Welling had fancied that Fanchon existed for him alone and was loved by him alone. And here was an array of horrible suburbanites, a gathering of calf-eyed yokels, a rendezvous of youths with yellow button-shoes, and maidens with red wrists and satin hair-ribbons, all come to weep in the house where Fanchon lay dead.

Welling had spent one unendurable hour shaking hands slowly and gravely with the pack of them, watching them wag their heads and deliver themselves of redolent sighs. By what Darwinian prank had they ever managed to become related to Fanchon—sensitive, undulant, almost ascetic Fanchon? He could not even imagine her knowing them—exquisite, pagan Fanchon.

And yet this lugubrious folk stood about, pattered up and down the house with solemn proprietary interest. They whispered of her among themselves as "Fan, poor little Fan." They broke down in groups and filled the rooms with the sound of their sobbing. And most depressing of all, in their long noses, uniformly red with weeping, and in their bony, pious faces, and in their insufferable grimacings there were traces of Fanchon—caricatures of some little habit of speech, grotesque versions of some little curve of feature.

Yes, they were unquestionably her kin, assembled from stray farms and stray flats to bury Fanchon. He moved among them bewildered. In the sound of tears and of whispers, in the presence of this tip-toeing, graceless fraternity there was something of mockery. For the fact that Fanchon was dead occurred to him only at intervals. It had not become, as yet, a part of his consciousness.

In the room that was lighted with the yellow glow of two little lamps and crowded with the tepid smell of flowers, Fanchon lay. They had piloted him with a sort of triumphant unctuousness to the threshold of this room.

"In here, Mr. Welling. She looks beautiful. Step right in."

The oil of two large paintings shone luminous in the half light. The curtains were drawn down the long windows. The flowers lay banked against the wall, heaped upon dim outlined chairs. A cloying, oppressive fragrance, like the penetrating odor of some sweet medicine, assailed him and intimidated him.

He stood gazing with profound disbelief at the casket, noting its elaborate

architecture, the gleam of its silver handles, the immaculate polish of its ebony. It was impossible that this thing could contain Fanchon—quick, eager, laughing Fanchon. He had feared to come into the room, feared that his grief might overcome him. Among this misshapen folk who claimed kinship to Fanchon he felt a stranger among strangers and the thought of revealing to them the tears of his love had been repugnant.

He knew now as he stood on the threshold of the room that he would not be overcome. In these musty, dolorous blooms that gleamed in the half light, in this shining rectangular casket, in all the stiff artifice which surrounded the death of Fanchon there was nothing to recall to him the things he had lost. Yet he hesitated. No longer fearful, he still felt disinclined to enter. Had she been lying in a bed or even stretched across the floor he would have rushed to her side, thrown himself weeping and dazed before her. But this precise thing that he could vision lying like an elaborate doll. . . .

"Won't you step in, Mr. Welling?"

A fastidious, guiding note. An uncle in all the glory of his grief, presiding with funereal aplomb.

Underneath a glass cover, amid opulent white satins, her hands stiff and crossed upon her breast, was Fanchon. No, he would not step in. It would be necessary for some insane reason to walk on his tip-toes, to stand staring down at the thing under glass for a respectably long period and bite his lips, wag his head and sigh. Otherwise this creature with the mustache who was an uncle would be disappointed. What morbid urge had carried him to the house at all? He had come running, unbelieving, assuring himself with an infantile grimness that the thing wasn't so—couldn't be so.

A sound of steps behind him inspired a hope. They came—two old women and a young man—long-faced, long-nosed, walking stiffly.

He turned and stared at them. There was a proprietary, eager air about them. They hesitated at his side with an exaggerated deference, and he stepped aside.

"This way, if you please."

The mustachioed uncle, with the triumph of an interrogated floor-walker, held out his arm, indicating the obvious casket. The two old women and the young man, pretending a seeming loss of direction, fell thankfully in the wake of their guide. The four ranged themselves alongside the casket—frightened, timorous, eager. Their heads were bent at a precise angle. They were looking down upon Fanchon.

He was in the library before anyone noticed him leaving. There were people in the library. Two of them approached him and asked him sibilant questions. He emerged into the twilight street with the relief of a man quitting some ghastly farce. Tomorrow it would be worse. There would be the funeral, a procession of hack drivers and yokels and aunts; a shining faced ecclesiastic vociferating turgidly the glories of heaven; strangers, tears, drawn faces.

Fanchon was dead. He paused automatically and stared into the window of a department store. He had walked more than a mile. A drizzle of rain was in the thin darkness. Theater signs, corset and physic-water advertisements, a zigzag of names and phrases blazed and drifted about in the air, their yellow gleam blurred by the mist. People were still tip-toeing into the flower-smelling room where lay Fanchon and peering at her.

He had been thinking, while he walked, of these people, laughing somewhat savagely at the memory of them. Now and then the thought of Fanchon had intruded, but the thought of the people in the home had been more real. They vanished now with a strange suddenness from his mind. A violent self-pity took possession of him. He reflected upon the obvious and yet inconceivable fact that Fanchon was turned to dust. Fanchon who had loved him. Fanchon with whom he had walked four days ago in this very street.

Each thought that came to him now seemed to add to the weight and the depth of his grief. The detail of her voice—he could almost hear it—the detail of her hair and her eyes—bit by bit Fanchon became alive in his thoughts. He stood in the gloomy drizzle, his heart lacerated with the memories of her.

"Gone, gone," he murmured, "and with her everything."

It seemed to him Fanchon had taken with her all that made his world beautiful. He walked on slowly with the gait of a man staring at himself. About him an emptiness. In his mind the pain of grief, the thought that was like a wound.

"Gone, gone," he repeated with a desire to weep. Beautiful Fanchon!

He continued down the street, turning a corner now and then. His mood grew somewhat calmer. There was left in him an agony more quiet, more humble. The mere thought that he had loved her seemed pitiably insufficient. He remembered other women whom he had loved, women before Fanchon, women who had left him embittered with disillusion. They too had aroused in him stirrings for possession. The forced elations of a man too eagerly bent upon love, reactions to loneliness, to self-hate. The innumerable half-loves of the sentimental male—these others—vicious, hysterical and invariably maudlin. Why in the name of justice had they been permitted to live and Fanchon called to death? Infantile platitude! He smiled faintly at himself and his smile plunged him into moments of impersonal thought.

With Fanchon had come a deeper, more vibrant meaning to life. He was now walking the boulevard along the lake. The city was more leisurely here. People walked with umbrellas opened in search of diversion, gathering in clusters before the windows of the avenue shops filled with gems and paintings, bric-a-brac and fabrics. He noted the scene—the Middle West in etching. . . .

With Fanchon had come things at which he had once been wont to smile. Would he ever be the same, now that she was gone? With the innate blush of a man contemplating his virtues, Welling tried to remove himself from such conjecture. But it persisted. Fanchon had appealed to the very best in him. She had aroused in him desires of love almost æsthetic. There had been neither deceit nor hypocrisy between them. Incomparable Fanchon! Yes, he would serve her in memory by keeping intact those qualities she had awakened in him.

It was raining. He felt his clothes growing cold. The rain bubbled about his feet and swept in sparkling gusts over the pavement. He looked about him. The crowd of the street had grown thinner. Ahead of him gleamed the electric sign of a restaurant. Overtaken suddenly by a deluge of water, Welling broke into a run. He halted under the flapping capopy that stretched from the garish entrance of the inn to the curb. The door in front of him opened. He saw that the place was almost empty and he entered.

Here and there at a table sat solitary figures, and here and there a little group, having belated dinner. Behind a screen of palms an orchestra was playing half heartedly.

Welling chose a table against the farthest wall. He would be alone here and could sit until the rain ceased. A waiter approached. Welling ordered brandy and remained staring at the frescoed wall. Here in the half empty restaurant there returned to him the misery he had experienced when he had paused after his dazed walk to look into the department-store window. The wound in his thought seemed again to have opened.

"Gone, gone," he muttered.

Passionate phrases came to his lips. Violent sentences hurled themselves through his brain. He could do nothing. He could only sit and know that she was gone, with people tip-toeing about and leaning over to stare at her under a glass cover. The drink arrived at his elbow.

He could do nothing but sit and stare into a future that was like a dismantled stage. Ah, the unbearable dullness and loneliness without her! He drank from the glass before him and the liquor passed unheeded down his throat. Tomorrow they would slip her into the earth and drop shovels full of dirt upon the immaculate polish of the ebony casket.

And there would be no more Fanchon, not even the elaborately stuffed doll that lay posed amid the white satins.

II

It was still raining. He could hear the halloo of the drops upon the windows over his head.

He raised his brandy to his lips and swallowed it slowly. They had brought a warmth into his body, these brandies. They had seemed to straighten his heart and his drooped spirit. He smiled at the table-top and shook his head. Getting drunk while Fanchon lay dead!

Nevertheless it was better this way. It was simpler.

He beckoned again to the alert waiter. As he turned, his eyes swung upon a girl standing hesitant and alone before a table to his left. He looked at her and a curious pain passed through him. For a moment he had thought her—Fanchon. Yes, by the color of her hair, the poise of her head, the very tilt of her lips in their half smile she was Fanchon.

He continued to stare after the waiter had departed on his mission. Of the same height and build, of the same air—but seen close, she was not Fanchon. Ridiculous thought. And yet he had experienced a sensation of fear when first his eyes had lighted on her. She was smiling—and at *him*. Welling passed his hand over his brow. Was it Fanchon? He felt himself swaying in his chair. The sound of the orchestra wailing behind him and the colored lights of the room grew confused—became like some far removed and vague background.

She was sitting at his table, at his elbow. Her hat was preposterously large, preposterously colored. Fanchon had never worn a hat of such tasteless dimensions. What an ass to have fancied her Fanchon!

"I thought you were someone else," he explained, speaking with careful slowness.

And the creature at his elbow answered, assuring him blithely,

"Oh, that's all right. I was caught in the rain."

As if it didn't matter that she looked like Fanchon! Unappreciative fool.

The waiter appeared and with added aplomb deposited two glasses on their table. It was wrong, wrong. The word wrong bubbled in his head. What was wrong? Fanchon under the glass cover, poor little Fan with her hands folded clinging to a crucifix. Ah yes, he had forgotten about the crucifix. It was there, undoubtedly there. No, that wasn't what was wrong. This creature laughing at his elbow with the almost familiar face. He swallowed his drink and a pallor entered his thought. He began to talk.

"She died of pneumonia, four days. Got a cold and died. I thought you looked like her when I saw you."

Horrible babbler! Babble, babble. Good Lord, was he drunk? Well, it was simpler. It made him feel warm to babble, to lean over and tell this woman with the dark eyes of Fanchon what was in his heart. It eased something in him to babble. What was wrong? Babbling? No, Fanchon, she was dead! Drunken idiot, crying in front of this creature with the eyes of Fanchon. But it made him feel easier to cry. What was wrong about crying and babbling?

"Here today and gone tomorrow. That's the little secret, eh? I can remember her as plain—as plain—"

What was she saying? Something about the dead. Oh yes, a toast. He raised his glass unsteadily until it tinkled against hers.

"Here's to the dead," she was saying.

To be sure, the dead—Fanchon dead and tucked away under a glass cover.

"Here's to the dead," she was saying.

Silence now, while they drank. Solemn moment. Was it raining outside? Of course. And the people walking about on tip-toe. Insufferable fools, thinking they had some right beside the body of Fanchon.

"Here's to the dead," she was saying.

Yes, another toast. There couldn't be too many. Always to the dead, the wonderful dead.

Silence again while they drank. She understood—this creature at his elbow.

"My name's Millie," she was saying.

What did that matter? What other name was there than Fanchon? None, none. Dared he call her that? It was wrong, wrong. Again the word bubbled in his head.

Was he crying?

To be sure.

There was something in him that made him cry—an ache, an intolerable pain.

Her arm was sympathetically around his shoulder. It was simpler like this. To cry with an arm sympathetically around his shoulder. He was lonely. He would always be lonely. There would never be Fanchon.

"She was like you. Only thinner. But your eyes. Yes. I remember, as plain—as plain as—"

Another toast. Standing. Yes, one more final toast.

"Here's to—"

"It was too difficult to stand. It didn't matter.

"—the dead," he finished, and the drink went into his mouth. Her arm was warm and she was crying. Interesting creature. Crying because Fanchon was dead. Adorable sympathy. Who else was crying? No one. All the restaurant laughing, heedless. But this tender soul beside him, she was weeping. He reached his hand toward her.

"Don't cry." He spoke with a new sense of laceration.

The sight of the tears this friend was shedding excited him. Wonderful creature. He leaned over again and this time managed to take her hand. His head wagged slowly. He essayed a pat on her shoulder.

"Don't," he demanded. His voice broke. He would cry. His legs seemed to have left the floor. They floated about in the air under the table.

It was wrong. Where was he going? Someone handed him a hat and he placed it at once on his head—the exact place for a hat. One more toast. Fanchon. No. Very well. Impossible to walk. His grief upset him. His brain was reeling. The floor shot up and he slid patiently into a chair. Some chair. He felt himself sinking into a whirl. It was simpler. Funeral tomorrow. Yes, the whirl was simpler. Some one was with him. The girl with the eyes of Fanchon. He stared at her. His hands flopped across the table top and rested on her arms.

"Love you,' 'he murmured. "Love you. Don't go way. Break my heart if you go way."

He clung to her. Beautiful, noble creature. Not Fanchon, but yet as wonderful. Forget Fanchon. The past buried its dead. Drink a toast to the dead. For sake of memory. But a kiss for the living. Exquisite thought and phrased, ah!—phrased exquisitely. One more toast. Final. With a flourish.

"Here's—here's—"

The brandy danced in the uplifted glass. Eyes of Fanchon burned against him. Red lips and white throat. With a laugh—

"To the dead!"

The brandy slipped out of the glass.

"Love you, love you," murmured Welling, his fingers swollen and vague reaching again toward the rounded arms on the table top. Like a man shot, his head sunk, one ear up, on the table. His eyes closed and he felt himself cradled in the swaying of lights and surfaces.

The girl stared at him for a space. She reached forward and shook his shoulder. His head bobbed on the table with childish little bumps.

The girl stood up, her chin drawn in, her hands smoothing her dress stiffly. She remained as if waiting for a time

and then turned and walked through the restaurant.

A waiter with a business-like step approached the table. He lifted Welling's head and endeavored to right his figure in the chair.

"Set up," said the waiter hoarsely. "Come on. Hey, that's the boy! Set up."

Welling's eyes parted and he raised a bleared, sleepy stare at his mentor.

"Where's girl," he croaked.

"The girl's gone," the waiter explained with a sort of motherly humor.

"Gone, gone," groaned Welling. "Left me. Mis'rable fool. Left me alone. No good."

And with an air of finality he dropped his head again upon the damp table-top and snored.

III

THE carriages stopped after a long ride into the winding road. Men and women stepped out. The sun was bright on the grass. The white stones looked freshly washed and shone in the light. The little hillocks were overgrown with flowers. A woman in black with a wrinkled yellow face touched Welling on the arm. Their carriage had stopped. The woman raised her heavy veil.

"Here's the place," she whispered. She began to weep.

Welling stepped from the carriage and assisted her to alight. They had ridden together to the place—Fanchon's mother and himself. He led her by the arm and they followed the little procession that was walking across the grass. People were looking at them. They came to the grave. The mourners formed a circle about it.

Welling watched the scene with an almost detached air. He was thinking of the evening before. His thoughts clutched desperately at remembered bits. The pallor of his face deepeend. Was he ashamed? He murmured this to himself. A physical weariness made him dizzy in the morning sun. Things seemed unnecessarily bright. He had been waiting all morning for an answer to the query. Now it came as the old woman with the yellow face leaned heavily upon his arm. He supported her, his own legs trembling, his face twitching and his head hammering. Tears crowded his eyes. A grief that was almost an agony tore at his heart. She was gone—gone. Only that mattered. They were bringing her down the road, eight men carrying the shining black casket.

Through the murmurs of the little crowd about the grave he caught the words of a woman at his side. She was talking to the man who had tried to usher him into the room yesterday where Fanchon lay.

"Poor fellow. How pale he looks. He must be suffering. My, how he must have loved her. He hasn't slept a wink. Look at his eyes."

The words trailed away. Fanchon's mother was holding his hand. He squeezed her fingers gently. The minister at the head of the grave was reading from his black leather covered book. Through Welling's throbbing head there drifted a curious phrase—

"Here's to the dead!"

He straightened as a man who had been dreaming. Yes, Fanchon was dead! And he would never see her again. Grief crept leadenly into his heart and the woman at his side returned the caress of his fingers as he cried aloud.

SIC TRANSIT

By Frances Farmer

THE subconscious fear which was a part of her first emergence from sleep yielded, with wider consciousness, to the glad remembrance that he was better. She arose from her bed and opened the newspaper to learn that he was dead.

She sat there long. The carelessly assumed exquisite silken garment had fallen from her beautiful shoulder, her still beautiful shapely arms. Her wonderful white hair lay in soft disorder about her fine, strongly featured face.

But the calm sureness of her gaze was broken. It was uncertain, dumb, afraid. She had dealt with the problem of her life very long ago—definitely, finally. She had never wavered in her conviction. She was not now young; she had not needed youth. She had chosen from the proffered abundance of life the one thing; had laid firm, unrelinquishing hands upon its greatest gift. She had paid, lavishly and gladly, with the things—all of them—by which other women are content to live.

Her husband—he was the merest entity; somewhere—on another floor—in this great hotel; or by now perhaps in his offices downtown; somewhere in the city certainly, since he had left no word that he would be away. Children—she was primitive enough not to want them by any lesser love than this one to which God had now at last said no; complex enough to be wholly happy without them, since they were inexpedient.

Friends—all gone; not because they had condemned her—she had been quite strong enough to dominate them; but abandoned, deliberately eliminated because they were an interruption; they took time, robbed her of precious moments that might have been spent with him. Books, ideas—before she had known him they had meant little to her—with him much; without him they were a mockery. Her great wealth—there was nothing it could buy like an hour with him. She had bought gowns and jewels—to delight him. She had preserved her stately beauty — for him.

It—the money and bonds and lands and mines—had above all things made them possible to each other—justified them—placed them so high that the world beat in vain against their love. But she had lived her life without worldly pleasures—without any interest in any thing save through him, or in any other human creature. Tragedy had come to the world. She had given and given and given and given—and not heeded.

Her day, lived silently, broken by the excitement of purchasing something that might please him, of doing something that might draw into words her ever constant attraction for him, or enrich some possible hour of theirs together; dinner—loitering about palm-rooms and lounges and rotundas until the long-distance connection should have been established—the half hour at the telephone.

That was her day. A succession of such days was her life, broken by long days—sometimes by weeks—together in this great uncritical caravansary or some other, their secret comfortably open to the world. There had been comment, no doubt; but people were far more apt to remark of her that she was the richest woman in the State

than that she was the mistress merely of its greatest jurist.

But now where? Where to turn? She had squandered life. She had heaped all its potentialities upon the consuming flame of a single joy, and now suddenly that flame was gone out. She was afraid. She wandered lost in the universe. She was old and she needed youth. She needed children, and she was childless. She needed faith, convictions, anchorages; she had had but one.

Many, many hours had passed. It had grown quite dark. Softly the door opened. Her husband came in. He came to her and lifted her. He sought to draw her into his arms. She resisted rigidly. Then she sobbed and sank upon his breast—defeated.

THE CARIBBEAN FROM A NORTHERN GARDEN

By Grace Hazard Conkling

DOWN a trail of blue larkspurs
Out of far memory
Flashed a day of strange islands
On their broad wings of sea;

Till, the garden forgotten,
I was out and away
In a boat's swinging crescent,
On a wind-furrowed bay.

And delight shook my spirit
As the wind shakes a harp;
On the rush of dark headlands
To the sea gleaming sharp

With a surf like a sword-edge!
Oh the jewel-green hill
With its white coral village
Like a cloud standing still!

Though I tangle the sunset
In the dim northern trees,
Though I turn the pale foxglove
Into moon-colored cays

Where the larkspur-blue water
Casts a net of wild foam,
In this winter-doomed garden
How should I be at home?

L'AVOCAT

Bv Georges Beziat

MAL couvert par ses guenilles, Meffre, dans la nuit, grelottait. On était aux petits jours froids de décembre, qui font les longues veillées, si douces pour qui les passe au coin du feu.

Il marchait vite sur la route, mais la bise, qui glaçait l'eau dans les fossés, le piquait au visage, aux mains, partout où la peau était nue, et cela le faisait horriblement souffrir. Enfin, il allait être rendu! Victor, dit le Frisé, lui avait donné rendez-vous à la Croix-Verte, et à cinq cents pas devant lui, il apercevait, haute sur son socle de pierre moussue, la croix de bois, blanche de la clarté de la lune, qui dans le ciel découpait son croissant.

Un coup de sifflet, faiblement, modula le cri de la chouette et, sans qu'on eût pu savoir d'où il était sorti, un homme fut sur le chemin, au côte de Meffre.

Laconique, un colloque s'éleva.

— Ya longtemps que t'es là Victor?

— J'arrive. Fait froid bon sang!

— De quoi crever, le Frisé!

Meffre était long, maigre, souple. Sa tête massive et carrée présentait une figure blême, où le nez s'épatait au dessus de la bouche, grande, aux lèvres minces et serrées. Profonds sous leur arcade, les yeux petits et noirs animaient de leur regard perçant ce masque de chair poilue.

Court et trapu, Victor, dit le Frisé à cause de la crêpelure de ses cheveux très fournis, était moins laid, mais pas plus sympathique. Sa démarche pesante était encore alourdie par ce balancement du corps qui jette les épaules en avant et actionne les bras d'un geste de semeur.

—Ça tient toujours? demanda Meffre.

— Y a du bon; viens!

Ils reprirent leur marche. Victor, par habitude de se dissimuler, longea une haie qui, sur un côté, suivait la route, projetant des branches d'ombre. Derrière lui, allant à grandes enjambées, Meffre, par prudence, s'orientait pour savoir dans quelle direction il pourrait fuir, s'ils étaient dérangés dans leur besogne.

Une traverse coupa la haie, montrant, dans le fond, un petit mur de pierre, surélevé d'une grille qui accouplait de hauts barreaux de fer.

— C'est-là, renseigna Victor.

Loin de la route, d'ailleurs très déserte, c'était un endroit rêvé pour un cambriolage.

Haussés sur la pointe des pieds, ils examinèrent la disposition des lieux, la situation des fenêtres et des portes de la villa qui, au milieu d'un jardin, arrondissait son dôme jusqu'au faite des platanes qui l'entouraient et où le vent sifflait en agitant les branches sans feuilles.

— T'es sûr que le nid est vide?

— Dame! On sait jamais! Et puis quoi...

Le Frisé ouvrit son couteau à cran d'arrêt, qui fit le petit bruit sec d'un révolver qu'on charge, en fit miroiter la lame effilée en pointe de stylet, et cela voulait dire, qu'au besoin, il se chargeait de supprimer ceux qui le gênaient.

Meffre plia l'échine et, les mains sur les genoux, offrit ses épaules á Victor, qui put ainsi atteindre les pointes de la grille, le long de laquelle il se laissa glisser lentement pour retomber dans le jardin. Et bientôt son camarade, qui, plus grand et plus agile, n'avait besoin d'aucune aide, l'y rejoignit.

Contournant des corbeilles de fleurs, une allée de gravier dirigeait, dans le vert du gazon couvert de givre, sa ligne blanche vers le perron de la villa. Les deux hommes la suivirent, évitant de passer aux endroits où la terre plus molle eût moulé l'empreinte de leurs pas.

— T'as la trousse, le Frisé ?

L'interpellé haussa les épaules. Ses outils ne le quittaient jamais. Avec un léger grincement d'acier, une des fausses clés introduite dans la serrure fit jouer le pêne. Doucement, pour qu'elle ne criât pas en pivotant sur ses gonds, il poussèrent la porte et, par l'entrebâillement, ils se glissèrent sans bruit.

Meffre frotta une allumette, qui laissa sur le mur une trace phosphorescente, et alluma une bougie dont la cire pleura en grosses larmes sur ses doigts.

Ils étaient dans un large vestibule où les escaliers tournaient en escargot pour desservir les étages.

— On commence par le bas !

Dans la première pièce, un cabinet de travail modestement meublé, ils ne trouvèrent dans les tiroirs du bureau-ministre que des papiers sans aucune valeur.

— A une autre !

Ils parlaient voix haute, sûrs maintenant que le logis n'abritait personne. Dans le salon, d'un luxe pauvre, il n'y eut pas de butin pour eux et, de rage, le Frisé brisa, d'un coup de talon, une console dont les pieds s'agenouillèrent comme pour demander grâce.

— Au premier ! on sera p'-t-être plus heureux ! dit-il, et comme Meffre restait immobile, il demanda :

— Qu'est-ce que tu reluques ?

Meffre regardait une photographie accrochée au mur. Elle fixait une tête d'homme, la face étroite et longue, allongée plus encore par la barbe taillée en pointe, le front découvert, les yeux grands, expressifs. Cette figure, Meffre la connaissait : bribes par bribes, elle lui avait arraché l'aveu du crime pour quoi il comparut devant les assises : c'était celle de son avocat.

— Mon vieux ! j'en menais pas large ! L'avocat général voulait ma tête ! Alors lui, çui-la qu'est dans ce cadre, il a parlé ! Tous ont pleuré, et il m'a sauvé !

— Femmelette ! ça s'attendrit ! lança le Frisé, la lèvre plissée de dédain, laissant luire les dents, prêtes à mordre.

— Qui parle ici ?

La voix était partie du vestibule et, avant que les deux apaches eussent fait un mouvement, la porte du salon, poussée, laissa passer un homme de taille moyenne. Pour mieux voir dans cette demi-obscurité, il leva la lampe, qu'il tenait d'une main ferme. La lumière jaunâtre due pétrole tomba sur son visage, éclairant nettement les traits : les mêmes que ceux représentés par la photographie. Seulement, les ans avaient creusé davantage les joues et blanchi la barbe.

Il n'avait pas d'arme, et pourtant Meffre et Victor ne bougeaient, pas, intimidés par le regard froid et scrutateur que l'avocat laissait errer sur eux. Ses yeux se rivèrent à ceux de Meffre. Il venait de reconnaître son client. Il n'eut pas de surprise : il savait de quoi était capable celui dont il avait plaidé la cause.

Cependant le Frisé s'était ressaisi. Tenant dans sa main solide le couteau dont il cachait la lame dans la manche de la veste, il s'avança la tête basse. Son bras se leva pour frapper... Soudain, il chancela, ses jarrets ployèrent, son corps s'abattit en arrière.

C'était Meffre qui l'avait pris par les épaules et renversé.

Par terre. Victor se débattit, faisant des efforts surhumains pour se dégager de l'étreinte des doigts nerveux de son adversaire, qui réussit à lui faire lâcher son arme. Meffre ramassa le couteau, et, d'un geste prompt comme l'éclair, le ficha dans la poitrine du Frisé, dont les muscles se détendirent...

Il se releva et, se tournant vers l'avocat, témoin impassible de ce drame, il dit :

— Nous sommes quittes !

Et il sortit par la porte que, par précaution, Victor, dit le Frisé, avait laissée ouverte.

OCTAVE MIRBEAU'S DARLING

By George Jean Nathan

THE pretensions of Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian Madame Blavatsky, long since brilliantly stripped in the discerning essay of André Tridon, once more brazenly unveil themselves in the sequel to "The Blue Bird" and pirouette before the jury in all their droll nudity. This sequel, called "The Betrothal," is, like its stem-play, intrinsically little more than a George V. Hobart or Walter Browne Broadway morality show—much more suavely and restrainedly written, true enough, yet still of a but slightly higher level in the way of genuine imagination, philosophy, beauty, or sound art. It vouchsafes the same immature vagueness (promiscuously mistaken for mysticism), the same gaunt literalness (likewise confounded with designed simplicity), and the same dialectic diabetes (similarly confused with sweetness of viewpoint) that its predecessor vouchsafed. And it convinces all who in such appraisals are not given to mistaking beautiful scenery for beautiful drama that its creator is the most greatly overestimated dramatic writer of our place and time.

Dealing with the adventures of the adolescent Tyltyl incidental to his search for an appropriate mate, "The Betrothal," like "The Blue Bird," leaves in one the feeling that something is missing when at the fall of the final curtain one isn't invited downstairs for strawberries and cake. The air of a Sunday school entertainment—albeit a very proficient one—is difficult to get rid of. For Maeterlinck is the *de luxe* Sunday School superintendent of the modern drama: an amalgam of an European John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Charles Rann Kennedy with one of his eyes fastened piously upon the Aldobrandini Madonna and Sacré Cœur and the other rolling slyly at the Mlle. Arlette Dorgère and the Bouffes Parisiens. He has written phrases and passages of sheer and compelling beauty into the bulk of his work, but—with minor exception hereinafter to be noted—he has not to this day in that entire work written a single thing that has had a single thought in it, or a single wonder, or a single dream, much above the pitch of his own Tyltyl's metaphysic. Beside even J. M. Barrie, and the imagination and fancy of Barrie, he is mere advanced vaudeville: a literate song and dance man vainly endeavouring to clog to Mozart's G minor symphony.

The true artist is ever a true critic of his own work. Somewhere in his heart there is a bit of a critical snicker, a trace of a smile at himself. In the heart of Maeterlinck, as that heart is revealed to us, there is only a silk badge and a high hat. Where a Barrie, say, in a "Peter Pan"—which Maeterlinck at his best has not approached—winkingly trots out a tot of two to claim the play as her own, the Belgian Mrs. Rasputin sets out his "Betrothal" (a fuddled effort at a kind of "Peter Pan") with all the deadly soberness of a prohibition town. The body of this "Betrothal" is related in terms of the dream dreamt by Tyltyl and the amateurish content and literality of the writing might thus be attributed—as in the instance of "Peter Pan"—to the deliberate and eminently appropriate attack of the dramatist. But never for an instant can one believe this in the

case of Maeterlinck. The amateurish content and literality of the dreamless coda to "The Blue Bird" and omega to this last play have taught one too much for that. The amateurish content and the literality of the writing of "The Betrothal" is not the result of deliberation and relevant treatment; it is the result, purely and simply, of an amateurish and become sterile mind. Tyltyl awake in "The Betrothal" and Tyltyl a-dream in "The Blue Bird" are the same, and their adventurings are the same, and the philosophies and imagination that motivate them are the same. And all are barren, puny, third-rate. The symbolism of a Destiny that shrinks to nothingness as life's affairs, by the very theme of the play, abide by the decisions of this same Destiny—the magic cap that sees into the soul of a fanatical miser and discerns in that soul a great prodigality and charity—the philosophy that the true worth and profundity of a man's love for a woman is conditioned on the approval of the children that are to be born to them—of such impenetrable bosh and quack sentimentality is such a Maeterlinck work as this "Betrothal" all compact.

The truth about this Flemish Ekdal *père* is that, aside from his three little one-act plays, "L'Intruse," "Intérieur" and "Les Aveugles," he has written nothing for the stage that might contribute legitimacy to the exalted estate in critical and artistic favour to which he has attained. And these little plays —the two best, in particular—were the fruit of his earlier dramatic years. Founding the theory of the symbolist drama, he was to reveal himself incapable of the strength to build higher upon the cornerstone; and the progressing years have disclosed him more and more in the light of a half-squiffy and extraordinarily moony female Joseph Conrad wildly tossed about and regularly shipwrecked on the allegorical high seas. The Maeterlinck of 1902 and on, the Maeterlinck of "Monna Vanna" and "Maria Magdaléne," of "The Blue Bird" and "The Betrothal," the Maeterlinck of Sunday supplement uplift sermons on the lovely life after sweet death, the Maeterlinck wistfully smelling at a rosebud while being interviewed in his ruined castle, the Maeterlinck photographed atop a hill at sunset looking out to sea like a moving picture fade-out, the Maeterlinck of the carefully mussed gray hair and the sad Marie Doro look carefully cultivated in his eyes—this is the soul of the true Maeterlinck, the true soul of the Belgian Belasco, the mark of an artist who started forth nobly and not without splendour on the highway of literature and, finding the road long and winding and full of rocks, calmly sat himself down and decided to make easy and comfortable winks at the box-office, at Mr. Hearst's opulent pocketbook, and at Dodd, Mead and Company.

Maeterlinck's neo-romanticist fame, when closely analyzed, is found to have been the result of a critical confusion of dramaturgic novelty with artistic integrity. On the higher plane, Maeterlinck profited by the delusion much the same as did, on the lower, the author of the tin-pot "On Trial." His valiant attempt to disengage art from the details of actuality, as the phrase has it, has succeeded in the main only in disengaging himself from the details of art. If he has divorced himself from the details of actuality, he has made the actual moonlight of the world into a mere spotlight stage moonlight, and the actual mysterious stars of the heavens into so many mere miniature incandescent bulbs. He is not a voice in the wilderness; he is a wilderness in the voice. Words, words, words—many of them singing and lovely—but still mere words, words, words. If he knows the effects he desires to create, his skill is insufficient to permit him to obtain them. His rains impress one as falling from shower-baths, and one detects the stagehand hiding between his printed lines and obligingly shaking the sheet of tin and rolling the peas 'round the drum-head to create his storms. He is, as most always he has been, a poet

sitting bravely and rather splendidly astride the wooden horse on a merry-go-round, riding in blind and dogged confidence to a destination in the next block. He is Beethoven on a mandolin; Rosetti in passe-partout.

Last month there appeared in this magazine a little so-called filler, "The Master Mind." You may remember it:

"The ghostly darkness of the room"—it went—"served to heighten the effect of the seance. A sense of weirdness pervaded everything. The pale, calm face of the medium contrasted with the awestruck countenances of the spectators as the table rose in the air. Diabolism, mysticism, reigned supreme. Only one face, boredly indifferent, seemed out of place. It belonged to the gentleman who manipulated the piano wire."

Here, albeit unintentionally, is the best impressionistic criticism of Maeterlinck and the drama of Maeterlinck and the audiences before that drama that I have had the fortune to come across.

Taking Maeterlinck's dramatic writing from first to last, I cannot resist the conviction that it is, with the obvious exception of "Monna Vanna" and possibly "Maria Magdaléne," the essay form gone wrong. The poetic essay, that is. "The delicacy of technic displayed," wrote the Admirable Jim of his "Aglavaine and Sélysette" back in the drinking days, "is almost inconceivable." One is tempted rather to say almost invisible. For "Aglavaine and Sélysette" is poetry of a sort run, as the printers say, solid. There is no more dramatic technic discernible in its manœuvering than there is in the "Anatomy of Melancholy." The impression it leaves in the playhouse is of a stained glass window—considerably cracked—misplaced in the wall of the late George Edwardes' Gaiety; of a girls' choir tackling Moussorgsky.

In the critical school that detects in Maeterlinck a divine fire which sees "the star in the grain of wheat," I find myself, alas, wearing the dunce's cap and sitting on a high chair in the same corner with the Ashley Dukes who observes of Maeterlinck's advent: "This was the destined hour of the magician, and Maeterlinck appeared. The apparition was startling, and some critics, seeking a pompous imbecility to cover their confusion, named him 'the Belgian Shakespeare.' In this fashion Tchekhov might be named 'the Russian Ibsen', or Hugo von Hofmannsthal 'the Austrian Dante'. Such is the disintegrating force of the new idea upon the mind of the expert labeller."

The technic of Maeterlinck in his vain attempt to articulate the subconscious mood though suggestion and symbolic speech— an attempt generally confused by his admirers with an accomplishment—is at bottom the technic of the Futurists and other such current liberally spoofed art cults. Yet the same critics who get up steam over the theories and technic of Maeterlinck gallop to finger the nose at the theories and technic of the Futurists. Maeterlinck, in this general enterprise, amiably recalls Mr. Strunsky's Puh, the Hindu Omega.

"Puh is," we are told, "ultimate. But he is far more than the last word. He has banished the last word. Puh is the writer who writes without words. He has magnificently swept away the narrow conventions of word-forms, outworn and outgrown traditions. His thoughts are universal, not subject to time and space, needing no elaborately false temporal mediums for making them known. In fine, Puhism is the science of awakening thought by suggestion.

"Flith! F-l-i-t-h! Don't you immediately hear in those two magic words the concentrated autumn wind sweeping truculently through the brown woods and the sad scraping of raw limbs against each other? Don't you see the gaunt tree-trunks scrawling against the clouds and the shivering rabbit whisking through the eddying leaves? Or does that picture fail to chime in with your mood? Ah! Puh is adaptable. *Flith! F-l-i-t-h!* Hear now a gentle breeze sighing sentimentally across the

iris-beds along the river and one pee-wee calling to another in the top of the nearest willow; see the warm sunlight making patterns along the hills and flicking the wave-tops with silver.

"Puhism is nothing more than the adaptation of literature to the personality of the reader. Besides saving paper, the author never disagreeably accentuates himself, and each reader is left with his chance mood undirected and virginally pure. To each his own reaction to Life. What more can we ask of an author than that he provide his readers with thoughts? And what more simple and natural than to supply them with their own thoughts?"

In the aim of the technic of Maeterlinck, the sub-conscious mood, previously expressed only in terms of music, found words. But in the aim alone. For "Pélléas" and "Ariane"—and even "Monna Vanna"—have for the expression of that mood deserted their step-parent and gone back to their real birthplace, the orchestra, and to their real fathers and mothers hiding in the throats of the operatic stage.

The only flaw in Mr. Winthrop Ames' splendid production of "The Betrothal" is "The Betrothal." A compromise with the Gordon Craig theory of stage adornment—though why a compromise should be necessary I am not one to understand—the production is by long odds the most impressively beautiful of the season. It is unfortunate that a producer of the wealth and liberality of Mr. Ames should continue to proffer a so cloudy eye in the selection of dramatic manuscripts. Give him a good play and he can do it to the Queen's taste. But this series of "Morris Dances" and "Hushs" and "Her Own Moneys" and "Betrothals"!

II

More war plays. Of the recent consignment, probably the most capably made is "The Crowded Hour" of the Messrs. Selwyn and Pollock. Though, personally, drama of this general type fails to intrigue me, a purely critical view of the S. and P. product reveals a considerable shrewdness in the confection of the sort of theatrical exhibit that magnetizes the masses. There are a number of things greatly admired by the masses that I equally admire—as, for example, George Ade, the "Follies" and bock beer—but we split when it comes to the species of theatrical entertainment in which the German army bombards a French village by pounding on a long-range bass drum and in which the heroic American captain, after five terrible days spent crouching in shell holes and dugouts, rushes onto the stage with a uniform torn to shreds and a clean shave. Such splendours somehow do not seem to move me as they should; but, then, such plays are not written for the sole purpose of getting favourable reviews in The Smart Set. Which, in a way, may be a good thing, since a great many plays that are favourably reviewed in that magazine have a peculiarly irritating habit of making off promptly for the storehouse. I have a certain amount of respect for the young man who writes dramatic criticism for the periodical in question—though his essay on Maeterlinck in the present number impresses me after careful re-reading as being only so-so—yet the regularity with which his enthusiastic endorsement of a play seems immediately to put the Indian sign on the play is beginning to make me think something is wrong with the fellow. Once in a while, true enough, he seems to like an ordinary trick melodrama such as "The Unknown Purple" or a light boulevard farce like "Sleeping Partners" that nevertheless surprisingly makes money for its producers, but for the most part he is to be found throwing his hat wildly in the air for such things as "The Phantom Rival," that made a noble hole in the Belasco pocketbook, and "Where Ignorance Is Bliss," that very nearly sent Harrison Grey Fiske to the poor-house. Therefore, the very circumstance that this curious young man fails to stir to a piece like "The Crowded Hour"—with its every other minute "Pour la

patrie!" and its psychology that moves a Broadway harlot theatrically to sacrifice the life of a man she madly loves for a suddenly dawning ideal—should speak well for its future prosperity. The authors, from the popular point of view, have manœuvered their comic relief very well: there is, indeed, a smack of George Cohan to it. As, for instance, the actor who has volunteered for the Y. M. C. A. Theatre Unit and who, caught in the town under bombardment, exclaims, "I wish to God I had two dollars and just one look at the Claridge!"

"What could you get for two dollars at the Claridge?" the girl asks him, drily.

He thinks a moment. "My hat," he answers.

A second play by Mr. Pollock, "Roads of Destiny," inspired by the O. Henry short story of the same name, carries atop its program the quotation: "All roads lead to the same end. The people and things that bring about that end may seem to be different—they may wear different faces in different corners of the world—but if they play the same part in your life to you they are the same." The quotation is the theme of the play. But in the staging of the play, the same actors who appear in the prologue are employed by the producer to enact the various subsequent episodes in the central character's life, with the result that the people that bring about the fatalistic end of the theme not only seem in no wise different but, whatever the corner of the world, wear the same prologue faces. The consequent confusion, to say nothing of the repetitions of episode inevitably necessary to the ideomotion of the theme, make for anything but a high evening. One of the four epigrams placed by the playwright in the mouth of his third act *bon vivant* —on the witty originality of which *The Times* gentleman commented at length —is Oscar Wilde's; a second is Mencken's (it appeared a few years ago in the pages of this magazine); and a third, unless I am very much mistaken, is a paraphrase of Balzac. Miss Florence Reed's performance of the leading female rôle is the high C of the occasion. It is obvious that this role was greatly fattened up for Miss Reed after her engagement for the part, since the play was patently built originally around the central male character.

III

"By Pigeon Post," a war play from the hand of Mr. Austin Page, was the conventional spy *passe-passe*, atrociously acted. "Remnant," by the Messrs. Dario Niccodemi and Michael Morton, was the venerable Maggie Mitchell dingus wherein the tattered waif of the streets squirts mottoes and sunshine at the *ignobles* living amid the gilt furniture. In the process of making over the French version into an uplifting and sweetly moral Broadway show, Mr. Morton, to the amusement of the wine-agents, forgot to eliminate the line in which the noble hero says he has protected the moral welfare of the little waif by making a home for her with himself and his mistress. Dr. Frank Crane, who endorsed the show with his customary discharge of Baptist Castoria, was doubtless downstairs hitting up a stogie when this juicy one transpired. The play, in the original no less than in the local version, is a cheap and empty piece of writing; and its performance on the local stage revealed, on the part of the participants, a great capacity for everything but acting.

"The Little Brother," by the Messrs. Goldsmith and James, is in the main but another of the numerous pro-Jew box-office baits. Mr. Walker Whiteside, familiar for his performances in the Oriental "Typhoon," "Mr. Wu" and "If," acts the leading rôle and gives a vivid portrayal of what seems to be a Japanese Jew. "Oh, My Dear" is the Princess Theater's sixth annual George Edwardes' show in miniature. While not so good as some of its predecessors, it contains the line, "I wonder what they'll do with oranges after prohibition comes?" The composer, Hirsch,

is not up to the Kern mark set in the antecedent exhibitions. The piece, however, is nicely staged.

IV

Cyril Harcourt's "A Place In the Sun" is the kind of play whose humour is achieved by causing one character polysyllabically to insult another character (as, "You imperceptible paleozoic atom"), and whose wistful pathos is contrived by causing the humble hero, upon the aristocratic heroine's asking him a direct question, to throw back his head, half close his eyes and begin, "I will tell you a fable. A fable about a rich Princess and a beggar who knocked at her gate. . . ."

That the play was written some years ago is evident from its author's patent striving to imitate the Shaw sort of thing, though it is to be admitted he has succeeded moderately well in this in the third of his four acts. For the rest of the play, however, his imitation takes such usual and transparent forms as having a male character exercise a sedulous rudeness to a woman character, and turning topsy-turvy the relation and attitude of children to parents. Mr. Harcourt, like many another, appears to believe that the best way to write a Shaw play is first to write one's own play and then without changing a line of dialogue, by transferring the names of the male characters to the women characters and vice versa, to put the male sentiments in the women's mouths and the women's ideas in the men's. The chief difference between Mr. Harcourt and Mr. Shaw in this enterprise is the difference between Mr. Harcourt and Mr. Shaw.

The theme of the Harcourt play relates to British class prejudice and seeks to exhibit the results of an amorous collision of caste and proletariat. It was the general observation of the local newspaper Sarceys that a play with this theme could not possibly succeed in interesting an American audience, since—I quote from four of the morning and evening editions—"in this country there is no such thing as caste, etc." Such critical flag-wagging is the veriest flapdoodle. Not only, of course, is there quite as much class distinction in this country as in England—if, indeed, not vastly more—but, what is more directly to the point, plays with precisely the same basic theme have regularly succeeded in interesting American audiences. The eternal "Iron Master" (with perhaps its American derivative "The Boss"), "The Lost Paradise," "Old Heidelberg," "Trelawney," . . . the innumerable native plays wherein the family of wealth and position opposes its son's marriage to a poor working girl or its daughter's marriage to a young commoner . . . all are intrinsically of the class versus mass posture. The Lords and Ladies of Tom Robertson and the Misters and Missuses of Owen Davis (*vide* "Forever After") are brothers and sisters under their skin.

V

THE only thing visible in the December theater worse than Miss Jessie Porter's play, "Betty At Bay," was the production vouchsafed that play. Suggestive of Mittenthal Brothers period of stage decorative art—that proud and carefree epoch of red bunchlight moonlit nights, isinglass windows, pine mahogany, and drawing-rooms richly hung with linoleum Gobelins—the exhibition of the Porter nonesuch was accomplished with a degree of comedic artistry seldom approached in the more modern theater. The prologue, billed on the playbill as passing at "the Peter Pan statue in Kensington Gardens, London," revealed an almost impenetrable African jungle set, suspiciously reminiscent of that in "Classmates" wherein Mr. Robert Edeson lost his way for days and from which, as connoisseurs of the true ambrosia will recall, he emerged half-crazed, his hands bleeding, his eyes popping out of his head, his clothing torn, and wearing a brand-new and very doggy pair of patent leathers. In this prologue the

heroine suddenly exclaimed, "How dark it is getting," whereupon bright day was promptly turned into night by the simple expedient of switching off all the foots and borders and shoving a Nile green slide in front of a partly visible bunchlight in the wings. The next act was laid in "Sir Charles Fellowes' Library; Ludworth," a library splendidly illuminated for purposes of night-time reading by a tiny red droplight suspended two and one-half feet from the high ceiling. Since the characters in this act smelled the odours of cooking the moment things were put on the fire, it was evident that the kitchen of Sir Charles' proud old manor house was situated just outside the library door. And twilight was suggested in the scene by throwing a brilliant cerise light against the windows. But enough of this.

As for the play, imagine a poorly written "Pollyanna" bringing down the big curtain by declaiming with intermittent fervent gulps a High School commencement address on Rule Britannia and at its conclusion flopping to the floor in a faint—and you have the picture. The play is an utterly worthless affair, devoid of imagination, invention, writing skill: the poorest thing that has been brought over from England since "A Little Bit of Fluff." Good plays are, true enough, not easy to find; but at least popular theater plays a hundred times better than this play were readily accessible. And vastly better not only from the artistic, but doubtless also the commercial, point of view. For instance, almost anything of Guitry's. For instance, George Hermann's "The Rake." For instance, Halm and Saudeck's "Forest of Bliss." For instance, even Harold Brighouse's "Odd Man Out." . . .

VI

In his newest version of the "Midnight Frolic," Mr. Ziegfeld once again demonstrates that he is without an American equal in his understanding of the music show. His efficiency in this direction is, indeed, seldom approached by the Europeans: the Marigny is the only Continental stage I know of that measures in any way with his. The latest "Frolic"—barring a barren one act fantasy called "Mr. Valentine's Christmas Party," in which Mr. Holbrook Blinn delivers a series of amorous stump speeches at various chorus girls appearing periodically before him in a green light—bears renewed testimony to his exceptional cunning in the matter of blending a fresh and excellent entertainment out of intrinsically familiar materials.

At the Bramhall Playhouse, Mr. Butler Davenport is presenting his own play, "Difference in Gods." Leaving the theater during the first intermission in search of an elixir, I came by chance upon a small neighbourhood tavern whose white jacketed Ponce de Leon is a remarkable professor. I commend him and his charmed philtres to your attention: he is worthy the investigation of the serious student. You may find him by turning to the right in the first alley to the westward. If you cannot locate his study chamber readily, make inquiry of the affable M. Nicomachus Flynn, officer of the law to the corner of Fourth Avenue and Twenty-seventh Street. When I returned to the Bramhall Playhouse three-quarters of an hour later, Mr. Davenport was standing on the stage just where I had left him—and the plot of his play was doing likewise.

So much for this chapter. Next month, or perhaps the month following, I shall endeavour to enliven you with an essay on "The Immutability of Laughter in the Playhouse," wherein I shall show you, among other things, that the very character and lines which have made the play called "Lightnin'" the biggest popular comedy success of the present season are precisely the same character and lines—literally—that made the play called "Tennessee's Partner" the biggest popular comedy success of the season of some twenty years ago.

SUNRISE ON THE PRAIRIE

By H L. Mencken

I

THE hope business formerly carried on *appassionato* by Randolph S. Bourne seems to have been taken over, of late, by Van Wyck Brooks. It is apparently many months since Dr. Bourne last enjoyed his old dream, once so gaudily set forth in the *New Republic,* of a proud and heaven-kissing super-America, standing solidly on its own bottom and pledged eternally to beauty, that sweet one, and to all the high exercises of the unadulterated intellect. When he prophecies at all, in these bilious current days, it is only to lament like Johann in Herod's rain-barrel, for what he sees around him and ahead of him is naught save a general boiling-down and debauchment of the spirit, so that all ideas yield to an insidious standardization, and the national soul ceases to soar, and even such professional bawlers as I am take the veil and become secret Methodists. But Dr. Brooks, despite certain discreet hems and haws, still cherishes a good deal more confidence and is truer to the glad metaphysic of his (and Bourne's) native New Jersey—as you will discover by a glance through his new book, "Letters and Leadership" (*Huebsch*). At the moment, he admits, there are unmistakable shadows athwart the American scene, and it may be argued plausibly that we "present to the world at large the spectacle of a vast, undifferentiated herd of good-humored animals"—Knights of Pythias, Presbyterians, Ph.D.'s, Prohibitionists, readers of the *Saturday Evening Post,* admirers of Massenet, sitters on committees, weepers at chautauquas, wearers of badges, honest householders, children of God. But in the course of time, he believes, this unanimous lethargy of the psyche will be thrown off, and men of powerful and original soul will leap from the mass, and a great art and a great philosophy will begin to bubble, and America will stand out as sharply and as brilliantly as Renaissance Italy or Periclean Greece, and the world will view the phenomenon with sentiments of approbation, and "we shall become a luminous people, dwelling in the light and sharing our light."

II

WELL, I shall be very glad, for one, to see this luminosity turned on, but for the present, I must confess, I observe no hand upon the switch. On the contrary, it seems to me that the shadows were never darker than they are today, and that we must linger in their blackness a long while before ever they are penetrated by authentic shafts of light. My reasons for this depressing belief—for this sad but ineradicable doubt that a grand intellectual awakening is upon us—are two in number, and I may as well state them at once. The first will require a long and perhaps somewhat tedious sentence, for which my apologies. It is that the United States, alone among the great nations of the earth, past or present, has come to its full growth without developing a native aristocracy, either political or intellectual, of any permanent position or influence, and that, in consequence, the banal ideas and cautious, stupid habits of mind of the great masses of inferior men prevail among us as nowhere else on earth and attain to a dignity and a

power that far surpass their intrinsic worth, and that, in secondary consequence, almost insuperable obstacles are put in the way of that disdainful reaction against them which lies at the heart of all sound art, of all sound philosophy and of all sound progress, here as elsewhere, world without end, Amen. The second reason, I am glad to say, may be stated less formidably. It is simply this: that the United States, despite all the current highfalutin about melting pots and national destinies, remains almost as much a colony of England, intellectually and spiritually speaking, as it was on July 3, 1776, and that all talk of developing an independent culture in such a colony, superior to the old or even equal to the old, is merely so much windy gabble, and as absurd as teaching one's grandmother to suck eggs.

In brief, the makings of such a culture are simply not here. We haven't got the machinery for it and we haven't got the heart for it. The things we lack are precisely the things that all other groups of colonists, however rich and potent, lack, to wit, self-confidence, the indomitable will to self-expression, intellectual courage, pride amounting to disdain, and, above all, a thorough organization of society in all its ranks. The upper rank is always missing; it remains anchored to the motherland; there is no incentive to its migration. And with it are all the other things, for they are inevitably in its keeping—confidence, courage, true pride. The aspiring colonist thus faces dismay the moment he essays that look inward which must precede the projection of individuality outward. The sense of difference that he notes, and that must be the kernel of any genuine self-expression, immediately translates itself into a sense of inferiority. In the motherland—in any motherland, in any wholly autonomous nation—there is a class of men like himself, devoted to translating the higher manifestations of the national spirit into ideas—men differing enormously among themselves, but still united in common cause against the stupidity of the mass. But in a colony that class, if it exists at all, lacks coherence and certainty; its authority is not only disputed by the inertia and suspiciousness of the inferior orders, but also by the superior authority overseas; it is timorous and fearful of challenge. Thus it can offer no protection to an individual of assertive originality, and he is forced to go as a suppliant to a quarter in which nothing is his by right, but everything must go by favor—in brief, to a quarter where his very application must needs be regarded as proof of his inferiority, and the burden of proof upon him is hence made double. This attitude must almost inevitably affect his view of himself; he must be a man of the very first class to hold to his ideas in spite of it. Such men occasionally appear in a colony, but they always stand alone; their worst isolation, indeed, is at home. For the colonial of less vigorous soul the battle is too severe. Either he submits to subordination and so wears docilely the inferior badge of a praiseworthy and tolerated colonist, or he deserts the minority for the far more hospitable and confident majority, and thus becomes a mere mob-leader.

III

So MUCH for the theory; now for a few applications of it. As examples of colonials strong enough to shake off the handicap of colonialism I give you Whitman and Poe—and after I have given you Whitman and Poe I can think of no other—perhaps Whistler may also sneak in. The salient thing about each of these men was this: that his impulse to self-expression was so powerful that it carried him beyond all ordinary ambitions and prudences—in brief, that the ego functioned so enormously that it even disregarded the welfare of the individual. Neither Poe nor Whitman made the slightest concession to what was the dominant English taste, the prevailing English authority, of their time. And neither yielded in the slightest to the maudlin emotions that passed for ideas in America; in neither will you find the least

reflection of the things that Americans were saying and doing in their day—even Whitman, preaching democracy, preached a democracy that not one actual democrat in a hundred thousand could so much as imagine. Well, what happened? *Imprimis,* English authority dismissed them loftily; they were, at best, rare freaks from the colonies. *Zum zweiten,* American stupidity denounced them as mere naughty fellows; both were unpopular and Whitman came near landing in jail. The accident that maintained them was an accident of personality and environment. They happened to be men accustomed to social isolation and of the most meagre wants, and it was thus difficult to deter them by neglect and punishment. So they stuck to their guns—and presently they were "discovered," as the phrase is, by men of a culture wholly foreign to them and perhaps incomprehensible to them, and thereafter, by slow stages, they began to win a slow and reluctant recognition in England (at first only from rebels and iconoclasts), and finally even in America. That either, without this French prompting, would have come to his present estate I doubt very much. And in support of that doubt I cite the fact that Poe's high talents as a critic, not having interested the French, have never got their deserts either in England or at home.

It is lesser men that we chiefly have to deal with in this world, and it is among lesser men that the lack of a confident intellectual viewpoint in America—a culture genuinely autonomous, and arising out of a natural and unfettered aristocratic reaction against the stupidity of the native masses—makes itself most evident. Examples are numerous and obvious. On the one hand, we have Fenimore Cooper—first making a cringing bow for English favor, and then, on being kicked out, joining the mob against sense: he wrote books so bad that even the Americans of 1830 admired them. On the other hand, we have Henry James—a deserter made by despair; one so depressed by the tacky company at the American first table that he preferred to sit at the second table of the English—the impulse was, and is common; it was only the forthright act that distinguished him. And in the middle ground, showing both seductions plainly, there is Mark Twain—at one moment striving his hardest for the English *imprimatur,* and childishly delighted by every favorable gesture; at the next, returning to the native mob as its premier clown—monkey-shining at banquets, cavorting in the newspapers, shrinking poltroonishly from his own ideas, obscenely eager to give no offense. A much greater artist than either Poe or Whitman, so I devoutly believe, but a good deal lower as a man. The ultimate passion was not there; the decent householder always pulled the ear of the dreamer. His fate has irony in it. In England they patronize him: he is, for an American, not so bad. In America, appalled by his occasional ascents to honesty, his stray impulses to be wholly himself, the dunderheads return him to arm's length, his old place, and one of the most eminent of them, writing in the New York *Times,* argues piously that it is impossible to imagine him actually believing the commonplace heresies he put into "What Is Man?"

IV

THESE antagonistic and yet correlative pulls—for they both make war upon the artist's primary yearning to express himself freely and fully; they both cramp him by threatening him—explain the general flatness and flatulence of American literature, even at its best. The literary artist, if he would come to any sort of repute at all—and it is only the colossus who can put repute wholly out of his mind—has a hard choice before him: either he must submit himself to the current standards of a culture that is at odds with his actual environment, or he must submerge himself in a pseudo-culture that is ineradicably hostile to all decent artistic striving. One sees the effects of the heartbreaking conflict in scores of talented men—Howells, with his

paralyzing surrender to Boston notions of what is nice, *i.e.*, to Boston notions of English notions of what is nice; Percy Mackaye, with his surrender to the mob notion that the aim of art is to lift up fat women and green-grocers; Owen Johnson and company, with their even worse surrender to the mob notion that what is most popular is most worth doing. But even more clearly the effects are visible in American criticism, which condenses into plain and damning propositions the seductions that betray the actual artist. On the one hand there are Brownell, Paul Elmer More and the rest of the honorary pallbearers of letters—bogus Oxford dons, jitney Matthew Arnolds, deceiving only themselves. And on the other hand there are the Mabies, Lyon Phelpses and so on—amiable but pathetic spokesmen of the artistic faith that lies in suburban pastors, fresh-water college professors and directors of the Y. M. C. A. The stars of the first posse seem to be on evil days. Though their culture is second-hand, it is at least a culture, and so they appear as foes to that grand movement against "privilege"—*i.e.*, the class-consciousness of the civilized minority—which now goes on. The second batch have the bleachers with him; the doctrines they preach in the *beaux arts* match perfectly the doctrines whooped in the chautauquas. No observant man, indeed, had excuse for surprise when the Creel Press Bureau, as a war measure, employed an Iowa Aristotle to prepare a ukase declaring Puritanism to be the official faith of the country, and denouncing any writer who flouted it as a hireling of the Hohenzollern. This was the logical conclusion of the "we churchgoers" æsthetic of Dr. Phelps.

V

WELL, what is to be done about it? As for me, I can't see that anything is to be done about it. Nor does it seem to me that there is any excuse for tragical attitudinizing in the fact. After all, there is no inherent reason why the culture of America should be distinct from the culture of England, save the reason that we, as Americans, find in our mere vanity. It would be just as sensible to argue that the culture of New Jersey or Arkansas should be distinct from that of the rest of the country, such as it is. In such things, when the chance offers, wise nature ordains a division of labor. A nation shut in by racial and linguistic isolation—a Sweden, a Holland or a France—is forced into autonomy by sheer necessity; if it is to have any intellectual life at all it must develop its own. But that is not our case. There is England to hold up the torch for us, as France holds it up for Belgium, and Spain for Latin America, and Germany for Switzerland. It is our function, as the younger and less confident partner, to do the simpler, rougher parts of the joint labor—to develop the virtues of the more elemental orders of men: industry, piety, docility, endurance, assiduity and ingenuity in practical affairs—the wood-hewing and water-drawing of the race. It seems to me that we do all this very well; in these things we are better than the English. But when it comes to those larger and more difficult activities which concern only the superior minority, and are, in essence, no more than products of its efforts to *demonstrate* its superiority—when it comes to the higher varieties of speculation and self-expression, to the fine arts and the game of ideas—then we fall into a bad second place. Where we stand, intellectually, is about where the English non-conformists stand; like them, we are marked by a fear of ideas as disturbing and corrupting. Our art, say in the novel, is imitative and timorous; when a challenge appears, as in Dreiser, it is immediately denounced, not as unsound but as immoral. Our political theory is hopelessly sophomoric and superficial; even English Toryism and Russian Bolshevism are infinitely more profound and penetrating. And of the two philosophical systems that we have produced, one is so banal that it is now imbedded in the New Thought, and the other is so shal-

low that there is nothing in it either to puzzle or to outrage a school-marm.

Unpleasant facts, but I see no reason for setting up vain denials of them. However much we may protest against them, it must be very plain that the English are aware of them. When, of late, they had occasion to woo the American *intelligentsia,* what agents did they choose? Did they nominate Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, George Moore and company? Nay, they nominated Conan Doyle, Coningsby Dawson, Alfred Noyes, Ian Hay, Chesterton, Kipling and company. In the choice there was high sagacity and no little oblique humor. The valuation they set upon the *illuminati* of These States was exactly the valuation they were in the habit of setting, at home, upon MM. of the Free Church Federation; they saw the Wesleyan beneath the master's gown and mortar-board. Let us look closely, and we shall see him, too. In church and state, in letters and philosophy, he is eternally on guard. Objectively, he gives us Prohibition, Comstockery and all the other grotesque flowers of mob morality. Subjectively, he gives us that distrust of ideas which cripples all honest inquiry among us, and subordinates all speculation to the safety and happiness of the stupid, and makes it almost as dangerous to advance a new thought as to practise a new vice.

This, of course, can't last forever. The levelling process has probably gone almost as far as it will ever go; the backwash will leave a nascent aristocracy on the shore, rubbing its eyes and spouting water. But it will take a long time for that aristocracy to be organized, and still longer for it to get itself oriented and effective. Until those periods elapse I am full of doubt that there will be any emanation of the luminosity described so hopefully to Dr. Brooks, heir and assign to Dr. Bourne.

VI

Among the miscellaneous books of the month there are some very good ones and some very bad ones. The best, perhaps, is Barrett H. Clark's "European Theories of the Theatre" (*Stewart-Kidd*), a very carefully selected anthology of critical doctrine, from the days of Aristotle to our own time. The volume is put together with sense and is extremely useful. Exhaustive bibliographies and valuable explanatory notes accompany the text. At the other extreme is Dr. Phelps' "The Twentieth Century Theatre" (*Macmillan*), a collection of fragmentary essays, highly respectable in doctrine. Dr. Phelps, in estimating the dramatic critics of America, accords exactly the same praise to George Jean Nathan and to Clayton Hamilton. This is a good joke on Clayton and an even better one on George. He gives a lot of space to the Drama League of America, and is apparently much taken with its endeavor to make the theater a machine for improving the mind, and hence the full equal, in the sight of God, of the chautauqua, the *Ladies' Home Journal,* and the late Men and Religion Forward Movement. A depressing book, though readable.

"The Modern Novel," by Wilson Follett (*Knopf*), is a much more thoughtful piece of work. The task Dr. Follett sets for himself is to find out just what it is in a novel that makes us want to read it, and then to work out the means of getting that interest there. The analysis is carried out ingeniously and convincingly; I know, indeed, of no more competent consideration of the subject. But the trouble with the author is that he somehow keeps it dull. Apparently he is without the knack of making his ideas interesting; even when they are quite new he gives them the color of the trite. The result is a book that is sensible and instructive, but wholly without charm. The same blight is upon "The Life and Letters of Joel Chandler Harris," by Julia Collier Harris (*Houghton-Mifflin*). Harris, I am convinced, must have been a very entertaining fellow, but his biographer certainly offers no proof of it. Once the story of his shadowed childhood is

told, he descends to the commonplace, and toward the end he is little more interesting than a stock-broker. In two other current literary books, the charm here missing is very evident. They are "Religio Grammatici," by Gilbert Murray (*Houghton-Mifflin*), and "Reminiscences of Lafcadio Hearn," by Setsuko Koizumi, his Japanese wife (*Houghton-Mifflin*). Each is a very thin book, and yet each is wholly delightful—Murray's because of its eloquent praise of the enchantment of books and Mrs. Hearn's because of its naif and delightful sincerity.

Hearn also appears in two volumes of the Penguin Series (*Boni-Liveright*), just launched by the publishers of the excellent Modern Library. The Penguin Series, it is announced, will be devoted to "new books of a distinguished literary value that have never before been published in America"—chiefly, it would appear, translations or things lost in inaccessible magazines. The start is made with "Karma," by Hearn, a collection of four essays and sketches; a volume of Japanese fairy tales, translated by Hearn and others; "Iolanthe's Wedding" and three other stories by Hermann Sudermann, and a reprint of Henry James' "Gabrielle de Bergerac," a souvenir of his earliest manner. The volumes are well printed and simply bound, and the series promises to be of unusual interest.

VII

Two new novels, "My Ántonia," by Willa Sibert Cather (*Houghton-Mifflin*), and "In the Heart of a Fool," by William Allen White (*Macmillan*), bear out in different ways some of the doctrines displayed in the earlier sections of this article. Miss Cather's book shows an earnest striving toward that free and dignified self-expression, that high artistic conscience, that civilized point of view, which Dr. Brooks dreams of as at once the cause and effect of his fabulous "luminosity." Mr. White's shows the viewpoint of a chautauqua spell-binder and the manner of a Methodist evangelist. It is, indeed, a novel so intolerably mawkish and maudlin, so shallow and childish, so vapid and priggish, that its accumulated badness almost passes belief, and if it were not for one thing I should be tempted to spit on my hands and give it such a slating that the very hinges of this great family periodical would grow white-hot. That thing, that insidious dissuader, is not, I lament to report, a saving merit. It is something far different: it is an ineradicable suspicion that, after all, the book is absolutely American—that, for all its horrible snuffling and sentimentalizing, it is a very fair example of the sort of drivel that passes for "sound" and "inspiring" in our fair republic, and is eagerly praised by the newspapers, and devoured voraciously by the people. One may observe this taste sadly, but it is rather vain to rail against it. The leopard is chained to his spots, and the dog to his fleas. This is the æsthetic echo and reflection of Christian Endeavor and the direct primary; this is what the public wants. And this is why the English sniff when they look our way.

I shall not afflict you with the details of the fable. It is, in essence, the usual and inevitable thing of its kind. On the one side are the Hell Hounds of Plutocracy, and their attendant Bosses, Strike Breakers, Seducers, Nietzscheans, Free Lovers and Corrupt Journalists. On the other side are the great masses of the plain people, and their attendant Uplifters, Good Samaritans, Poor Working Girls, Inspired Dreamers and tin-horn Messiahs. These two armies join battle, the Bad against the Good, and for 500 pages or more the Good get all the worst of it. Their jobs are taken away from them, their votes are bartered, their women are debauched, their poor orphans are turned out to starve. But in the third from the last chapter someone turns on a rose spot-light, and then, one by one, the rays of Hope begin to shoot across the stage, and as the curtain falls the whole scene is bathed in luminous ether, and the professor breaks into

"Onward, Christian Soldiers" on the cabinet-organ, and there is happy sobbing, and an upward rolling of eyes, and a vast blowing of noses. In brief, the finish of a chautauqua lecture on "The Grand Future of America, or, The Glory of Service." Still more briefly, slobber.

It is needless to add that Dr. White is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Nor is it necessary to hint that Miss Cather is not. Invading the same Middle West that engages the Kansas tear-squeezer and academician, and dealing with almost the same people, she comes forward with a novel that is everything that his is not—sound, delicate, penetrating, brilliant, charming. I do not push the comparison for the mere sake of the antithesis. Miss Cather is a craftsman whom I have often praised in this place, and with increasing joy. Her work, for ten years past, has shown a steady and rapid improvement, in both matter and manner. She has arrived at last at such a command of the mere devices of writing that the uses she makes of them are all concealed—her style has lost self-consciousness; her feeling for form has become instinctive. And she has got such a grip upon her materials —upon the people she sets before us and the background she displays behind them—that both take on an extraordinary reality. I know of no novel that makes the remote folk of the western prairies more real than "My Antonia" makes them, and I know of none that makes them seem better worth knowing. Beneath the swathings of balderdash, the surface of numskullery and illusion, the tawdry stuff of Middle Western *Kultur*, she discovers human beings embattled against fate and the gods, and into her picture of their dull struggle she gets a spirit that is genuinely heroic, and a pathos that is genuinely moving. It is not as they see themselves that she depicts them, but as they actually are. To representation she adds something more. There is not only the story of poor peasants, flung by fortune into lonely, inhospitable wilds; there is the eternal tragedy of man.

"My Antonia" is the best American novel since "The Rise of David Levinsky," as "In the Heart of a Fool" is probably one of the worst. There is something in it to lift depression. If such things can be done, then perhaps Dr. Brooks, if he lives to be 85, may yet get a glimpse of his luminosity. But what else is there to bolster up that hope? I can find nothing in the current crop. Mary Heaton Vorse's "The Prestons" (*Boni-Liveright*) is a creditable attempt at a series of miniatures. A typical middle-class American home is turned inside out; one sees, through the eyes of the mother, every atom of the domestic structure. But what the thing lacks is inner organization; the accumulated fragments fly apart. In the other native novels before me I can find nothing even so good. And in the imported books, whether of fiction or of fact, I discover only the usual third-rate rubbish — dismaying and ever-recurrent proof of what aspect our culture shows to foreigners. From England, for example, comes the latest volume of gaudy nonsense by Marie Corelli, by title "The Young Diana" (*Doran*), with a florid encomium by Dr. Frank Crane, the platitude king, on the slip-cover. And from France comes "Guynemer," a sentimental biography of the airman of that name by Henry Bordeaux, the French Harold Bell Wright (*Yale*), with an introduction by Major-General Roosevelt. Roosevelt's praise of this gifted burbler is characteristic. "You have preached," he says, "the essential virtues," *i.e.*, the Roosevelt virtues. This, in brief, is what is the matter with American literature—it needs no help here from eighth-rate French literature. It is still in the elemental stage of preaching virtues. It has yet to shake itself free from that moral certainty upon which the inferior man grounds his superstition of his superiority. It has yet to discover life as a spectacle—terrible, but infinitely beautiful. It has yet to pass from the gospel-tent to the mountain-top.